

"TWENTY YEARS AFTER" ROWING STORY BY RALPH D. PAINE

Nº 1, Vol. 29

TWICE-A-MONTH

15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

JULY

MONTH-END EDITION

OUT-JUNE 23, 1913



ILLUSTRATION BY H. W. MCILROY

Obsolete Ideas

By R. E. Olds, Designer

This is a time when many car makers are closing out old designs. And a time to watch out for passing features in the car you buy.

New Things

These are some of the coming features. The leading cars have already adopted them. Reo the Fifth now has all of them.

The time is fast coming when cars can't be sold without most of these features in them. And the lack today marks a passing type of car.

Left-side drive.

One-rod control.

Oversize tires.

Electric lights.

Set-in dash lights.

Roller bearings.

Vast overcapacity.

Left-side drive has come, in leading cars, to place the driver close to the cars he passes. In Europe, the laws compel this.

Over-tired cars have come into vogue to lower cost of upkeep. Small tires, while cheaper, cost the user vastly more for upkeep.

Electric lights and set-in dash lights are marks of modernness. The old projecting oil lamps are fast going out.

Roller bearings cost five times as much as common ball bearings. But in Reo the Fifth we use 15 of them because they do not break.

Overcapacity means big

margins of safety. In Reo the Fifth every driving part must meet the tests for a 45-horse-power engine.

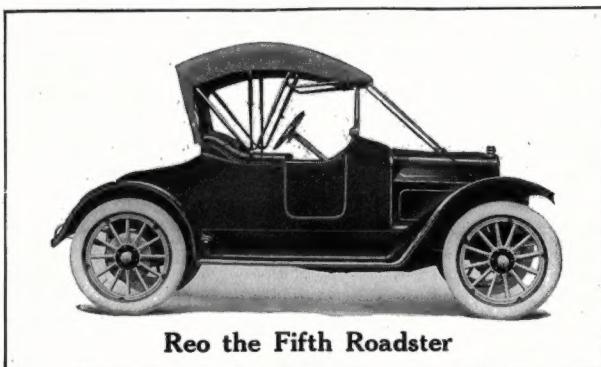
Rod Control

We have also come, before our rivals, to single-rod control. We have no levers, side or center, to block the driver's way. Entrance in front, from either side, is entirely clear.

All the gear shifting is done by a single rod, between the two front seats. It is done by moving this rod only three inches in each of four directions. Both brakes are operated by foot pedals.

One of the greatest improvements ever made in a car is this simple rod control.

Note that Reo the Fifth contains today about every new feature in sight. It is constantly kept up-to-date. In most new ideas men have always found it months in advance of its rivals. Whenever you buy it you get in the Reo the very latest type of car.



Reo the Fifth Roadster

Things to Come

There are other things in Reo the Fifth to which future cars must come.

One is, steel made to formula and analyzed twice to make sure of the requisite strength.

Another is gears accurately tested for 75,000 pounds per tooth. Springs tested for 100,000 vibrations.

Makers must use more drop forgings to avoid risk of flaws. In Reo the Fifth we use 190. They must use a doubly-heated carburetor—a higher-test magneto.

They must build slowly and carefully, test every part, grind parts to utter exactness. All the extra cost is many fold repaid.

Such things are expected in costly cars. But the Reo price shows that these precautions need not be expensive.

And they are essential to proper endurance, to low cost of upkeep, to safety.

A car without them may seem as good for a little time. But no such car can keep its newness, year after year, like the Reo.

These are all things to which I've come after 26 years of car building.

I make sure that each car is a perfect car, without weaknesses or flaws. It is built

exactly as though I built it for myself.

Such cars will be more common in the years to come, for buyers have learned to demand them. But none can ever go further in these respects than Reo the Fifth goes today.

New features will come, and we shall adopt them, as we are doing all the time. But a better-built car will never come. You may be sure of that.

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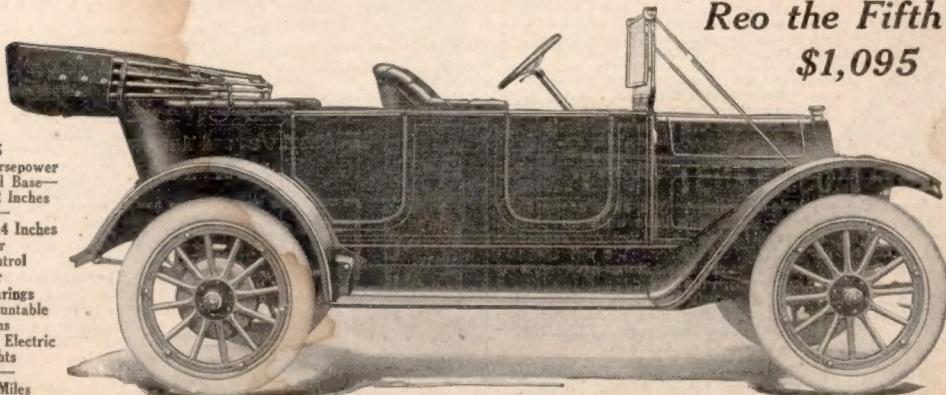
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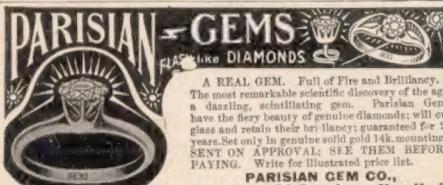
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VOLUME XXIX

NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXIX.

JULY 15, 1913.

No. 1.

The Laying of the Ghost

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "North of Fifty-Three," "The Lair of the Sun-Dogs," Etc.

Few stories have brought us so many letters as "North of Fifty-Three," Sinclair's last novel in the POPULAR. Many of the letters contained a request for a sequel, and perhaps we will hear more of Bill Wagstaff and Hazel some day. But in the meantime Sinclair has another story to tell, another Western tale, but this time about the miners. A big story of strong men and a girl as stout of heart as beautiful. We think this novel will prove as absorbing as the last.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

WANTED: FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS.

SUPPOSE now—just suppose—that you were a Misfit—yes, with a capital M. And that another Misfit came home on a dull, raw spring afternoon, came home from a sordid, cheerless little frontier hamlet to a line camp, which if it were not absolutely sordid, squatted cheerless enough among a waste of sagebrush. And that your Companion Misfit dumped a miscellaneous assortment of small packages on the table, shook a few choice cuss words out of his system, and, after sitting silent for half an hour, should calmly wonder aloud how he could get hold of fifty thousand dollars.

Would it surprise you? Particularly if by some subconscious mental process

you were convinced he spoke in earnest.

E. Buckingham Norris doesn't seem to fit a man who wears leather chaps, and a soiled felt hat, and high-heeled boots a trifle run over at the counter, a fellow who rides the range for a living, and doesn't make a howling success as a cow hand, at that. That was my line-camp partner's name. Up to that time I had never seen it in writing, but the clerk who sorted out the mail at the Bar-L store post office told all the boys. A polysyllabic brand like that finds small favor in the cow country, where men discard nonessentials at every opportunity. It was too much of a mouthful. So E. Buckingham became plain Buck.

No business of any great moment had taken Buck to White Loco on a day when he should ordinarily have

been jogging with me the miry length of Black Coulee looking for bogged cattle. He had just ridden in on the spur of the moment, so to speak. A cow-puncher doesn't ask the boss, you know, about a temporary lay-off of that sort. He simply goes. If the outfit considers itself aggrieved, they can pay him off—at least, it used to be that way. They tell me it's different now. Anyway, Buck had been to town. Knowing his tendencies, I had not expected him back for two or three days, perhaps a week. But here he was.

"Where's all that tobacco you were going to bring?" I asked, after searching the packages.

Buck grunted, and tossed me a sack from his pocket. He had his feet up on the rim of the rusty little cook stove, and he was neither talking nor smoking. That looked odd in conjunction with the fixed scowl on his lean, dark face. And then, after a long period of silence, he sprang this get-rich-quick query on me.

"I wonder," he said slowly, as if he were thinking aloud rather than addressing me, "I wonder how I can get hold of fifty thousand dollars?"

Under the circumstances, it struck me as a ludicrous proposition, and I grinned at the idea.

"At the current rate of wages," I calculated, "if you work all the year around you draw down four hundred and eighty simoleons. Ten years' earnings total four thousand eight hundred. Oh, about forty years or so, if you religiously abstain from ever buying any clothes—or indulge in riotous living. Banked at compound interest, it might pile up a *trifle* faster."

"Aw, choke off!" he growled. "I want fifty thousand dollars inside of six months."

I looked at him with new interest. He meant it—and it was bothering him.

"You'll probably keep right on wanting," I observed.

Fifty thousand dollars. It stirred a vague resentment in me—the mere mention of that sum. Not so very far back in my own misfit career—However, that doesn't matter.

"You might hold up a train," I suggested sourly.

"I wouldn't mind," he returned moodily, "if I thought I could get away with it."

"You keep on thinking along that line, old-timer," I remarked, "and you'll be planning the details first thing you know. Sometimes—quite frequently, in fact—the mere idea is father to the deed."

"Don't preach," he grunted. "You're a poor example to be moralizing."

That was a little trick of E. Buck Ingham's, digging me where I was really tender. He knew no more of me than I of him except what his observation had taught him in a season of riding the same range. But he was, like myself, cursed with an analytical mind, and he had all my weaknesses down pat. I was a poor preceptor of moral conduct. When a man is hovering close to the down-and-out brigade, it sometimes hurts him to be told these things by one of his own type. So I fell into sulky silence.

"I have certainly got to get hold of some money," I heard him say again. "And that's no dream."

He reverted to the subject twice before bedtime. The pertinacity of the desire made me wonder what lay back of it. But I knew Buck Norris better than to ask personal questions even if I'd been of a prying, curious, bent, which I am not. It seemed strange, that was all. When a man has dropped out of his class, and, being good for naught else, has gotten a job that provides all his living expenses, with forty dollars monthly in cash to save or squander at his pleasure, he is seldom bitten by a sudden hunger for comparative wealth. There is a cause behind every effect. If Buck Norris wanted money badly the need must lie in some connection remote from his range life, for in the cow country money to such as Buck Norris and myself is a curse, and we know it; it means only whisky, cards, and kindred—well, say diversions. If Buck needed fifty thousand dollars, it was because something had arisen to confront him from another

condition of life, where E. Buckingham was appropriate to the environment. I could easily understand *that*.

But it was not my funeral, as they say on the range, except that it roused a sequence of thought which I would gladly have avoided, gave me a retrospect that I never faced without bitterness of spirit. When a man has had every chance in the world to lay hold of all that makes life thoroughly enjoyable, and loses his grip through sheer cussedness on his own part, a backward look is always painful. There were times when I found myself loathing the manner of life I had drifted into, the dirty little log shack, the rusty stove on which we cooked our coarse fare—these revolted me without rhyme or reason. Beyond the windows spread the acme of desolation, flat, gray, unendingly monotonous. No wonder, I would say to myself, that a cow-puncher gets drunk and shoots up the town.

Yet these things lie pretty much in the individual point of view; they are largely subjective. When I first struck the cattle country, and got a good horse under me, I felt as if I had just gotten out of some stifling prison. There were times when the smell of the sagebrush was as sweet in my nostrils as any rose garden that ever bloomed. And at such times I could see the alluring figure of Romance personified in the mounted men who swept the sage country, living their lives big, untrammeled by conventions, unhampered by any laws save those that were reared on the basic principle of a square deal. If they lacked much of this thing termed culture, they were free of the puerility of body that is oftentimes the price of culture.

Civilization is inevitable; in many ways it is eminently desirable; but it does not thrill me with gladness that I am a part of it. The range life did, when I was not in a mood to visualize the crudities of it without the charm. Buck Norris and his sudden outspoken yearning for money had stirred up my pack of sleeping dogs. Buck was like myself. I have met odd ones of the

type—failures, from one reason and another, in the crowded places, and barely holding their own in the lusty young West. Moreover, by reason of this common bond—for there is a bond in failure, stronger perhaps than that of mutual success—by virtue of this we could take liberties with each other that neither would have thought of taking with his fellow punchers. That is probably why, at breakfast, when Buck again spoke absently of money, I asked peevishly:

"What the devil do *you* want with fifty thousand dollars? It wouldn't do you any more good than fifty."

He rested his elbow on the table, and looked at me queerly over a plate of soggy hot cakes.

"I want to lay a ghost," he said quietly.

And when I snorted he smiled to himself, and went on eating his breakfast.

CHAPTER II.

A PATRIARCHAL WAYFARER.

Far south of us, upon such days as the atmospheric conditions chanced to be right, we could catch tantalizing glimpses of the Pinnacle Range—blue, mysterious spires dim against the sky line. They lay far beyond the southern sweep of the Bar-L round-up. The cattlemen of that region held mostly to the open country, the sagebrush, and the rolling grassland. The Pinnacles were of ill repute in the cow business. Deep snows lay there all winter, even late in the spring, and a wild jumble of rocky cañons where little grass flourished. It was given over to miners, and an Indian reservation bordered upon it. But many a time we of the plains, choking in the summer heat, gazed longingly at the lofty peaks, with their promise of shade and clear, ice-cold water seeping out of the riven granite.

This is by way of digression. I was standing in the doorway of the cabin only a day or two later, getting my first look in a fortnight at the Pinnacles, when Buck rode away without

a word of his destination. I thought little of that, although we rode together mostly, until night fell and he did not return. Nor did I see him again till the evening of the third day following. He came in at dusk, grunted a brief greeting, and threw himself wearily on his bed. I did not disturb him with questions. Frankly, I surmised that he had been to White Loco, painting the town the usual hue.

"Had any supper?" I asked at length—a superfluous query, since the nearest camp was twenty miles away.

"Uh-uh," he grunted.

"I'll make you a cup of coffee," I volunteered.

"All right, if you will," he acquiesced.

I built a fire, made coffee, and set forth the warmed-over remnants of my own supper. And when it was ready I called him. He did not reply. The twilight had filled the cabin with shadows, and I walked over to the bed with a candle. He was sound asleep.

"By jingo, if I'd known you were going to snooze it off," I grumbled, "I'd have saved myself the trouble. Here—come out of that trance."

I shook him, and he jumped as if I had pricked him with a pin. For a second he glared around, wild-eyed. Then he laughed.

"I was dreaming," he remarked. "A regular wolf of a dream."

"Eat your supper," I advised, "and then you can dream all you like."

He looked over at the steaming coffee on the table.

"You're a pretty good sort, Dave," he observed. "I am hungry, and I couldn't have cooked a meal to-night to save my soul."

I sat covertly watching him while he ate—ate ravenously, like one long deprived of food. The upshot of my observation was that, whatever mission he had been on, he had not been drinking. There was no smell of liquor about him—to say nothing of the fact that if he had been on a spree he would have come home with a bottle of whisky in every available pocket. His eyes had none of the telltale redness of a

debauch. But he had been somewhere, engaged upon strenuous business, for sheer physical weariness rode him mercilessly. He dragged himself heavily to the table, ate his food silently, and in the very act of rolling an after-supper cigarette his head sagged forward, and he came within an ace of dozing off in his chair. Whereupon he cast the tobacco impatiently aside, and rolled into his bunk. He was asleep in five seconds, breathing heavily, booted and spurred as he had dismounted.

I took a lantern then, and went to the stable, prompted only by the humane motive of seeing that his mount was fed. Not that Buck Norris was the sort who would ever neglect a dumb brute; he loved horses, and was more merciful to animals than he was to himself or his own kind. But I am a sort of an old woman about horses myself, and I wanted to make sure.

The big gray—the best and toughest horse in his string—stood munching at a mangerful of hay. But he had been ridden out; there was no room for doubt on that score. The weary droop of his hips told the story; and the lantern gleam showed a sweat-roughened coat, the dried lather clinging in flakes and streaks on flank and shoulder, where it had oozed from under the saddle blanket. Certainly Buck Norris had been traveling. And, glancing then at his saddle, I noted something which had hitherto escaped me—Buck had carried his Remington in its scabbard, slung under the right stirrup leather. Now, why, I asked myself, should a man ride hell-for-breakfast across country, the way he has undoubtedly been doing, from the looks of his horse, with a rifle under his knee?

However, it was none of my business, and, being satisfied that the gray was fed and watered, I went back to the cabin and to bed.

Buck was still asleep at daybreak, sprawled ungracefully on his back, snoring to high heaven. I cooked breakfast before awakening him.

"Well, what's the latest excitement in Loco?" I asked, while he was washing his face and hands.

"Don't know," he replied absently. "I wasn't there."

I looked up at that, but held my own counsel. It was not my affair where he had been, or what he had been doing, if he did not choose to tell.

"No, not guilty," he continued. "I have not been in White Loco. I have not been looking on the wine when it was red. I was merely—oh, well, it doesn't matter. Anybody here while I was gone?"

"Not a soul even showed in the dim distance," I replied truthfully. He turned his chair and stared out the open door.

"Lord but I'm sick of this!" he broke out suddenly. "I wonder when round-up will start? The grass is coming up."

"Soon enough," I remarked pessimistically. "What's the odds? You'll only have a different sort of kick coming. You recollect Cartwright said the last time he was here that the outfit had bought a lot of young horses. They'll hand you a few of the meanest. I'm sure glad I'm no broncho peeler."

"It'll be action, anyway," he grunted. "Anything's better than this."

He went off to the stable, while I set to work clearing away the breakfast things. The job was scarcely half done before he was back.

"Somebody's coming out the Loco trail," he announced.

Afar in the unending sweep of the sage a black object had cropped up among the gray. At the distance I could not tell if it were a horseman or a rig. It approached very slowly.

Buck wiped the dishes as I washed them, and then we watched the moving dot draw near with an interest that only those who have dwelt in lonely places can appreciate. A cow-puncher is no hermit. He is a group product, doing his daily work, for the most part, in company with a score of his own kind, in a riot of dust and colorful, exciting action. When certain contingencies of the range set one or a pair apart in some isolated camp for weeks at a stretch—as Buck Norris and I

were set apart by reason of weakened cattle ranging a twenty-mile sweep of miry bottom land—he rebels against the solitude, and welcomes whosoever happens along as a potential break in the monotony, and possibly the bearer of news from distant ranges.

So we sat upon the sun-dried earth before our cabin, and smoked, waiting expectantly the approaching traveler.

"It's a fellow afoot, leading two horses," Buck, whose vision was a trifle keener than mine, presently announced. "You'd have to set up a post to see him move."

This proved to be correct. It was odd to see a man walking when he had saddle stock at hand—odd in a country where men mount if only to traverse a scant half mile. As he drew nearer, we could see that the two horses were packed. And when the wayfarer came slowly up to our rude quarters we saw that he was an old man—a very old man—the wreck of a once magnificent physique. A patriarchal figure in faded overalls, with a silver beard that reached low on his sunken chest. His weather-beaten face was sadly bruised, as if he had but recently suffered a vicious assault. And there was dried bloodstain on the front of his blue flannel shirt.

"Howdy, boys, howdy?" he greeted.

"Pull off your packs, old-timer, and stop a while," I invited. "It's going to be pretty hot traveling in an hour or two."

"I dunno, boys, I dunno but I will, thank yuh," he said. "Yuh got plenty uh water here, I reckon. I made a dry camp last night."

"There isn't much water between here and Loco, and that's a fact," Buck remarked, as he led the way to our well.

We helped the old man unpack his animals, and fed his horses a little hay. Then we fed him, for a dry camp overnight is no joke. A man cannot eat without water on a trail where the alkali dust, flicked hither and yon by sportive whirlwinds, chokes his throat and burns his eyeballs.

The old man finished his breakfast.

As he filled a brier pipe, ancient in appearance as himself, his eyes rested on the distant Pinnacles, a hazy purple blur in the south.

"I come from over yander—them mountains." He turned his tired old eyes on us. "I wisht I was like you boys fer six months—young 'n' husky. But I'm a-gittin' old—gittin' pretty old, all right."

"Pshaw! You're good for many a year yet," Buck heartened.

"Mebbe—mebbe," the old man admitted plaintively. "But I kain't horn-swoggle m'self into no sech idee."

He crossed his knees, and puffed slowly at the smoke-blackened brier.

"They's a young feller workin' for the U Up U Down on War Post," he said presently. "Ain't that somewheres in this here flat country?"

"The U Up and Down? Their home ranch is on War Post, about forty-five miles northwest of here," I told him.

"This young feller—name's Bobby Tarleton," he continued. "Mebbe you boys know him? I'm a-lookin' for him. I wonder if he's at this here home ranch?"

"No," Buck answered, "he isn't. I know Tarleton. But he has quit the U outfit. One of their men told me so two or three weeks back. He went south—into the Bighorn country somewhere. Told them he expected to wind up on the Laramie River this fall."

The old man sat silent. Finally he spoke, in a disappointed, hopeless voice:

"I don't reckon I'll get to see him, then. Waal—waal—"

He fingered his white beard with a hand upon which had fallen the tremors of old age, and he blinked a long time at the distant Pinnacles.

"Waal, I reckon," he muttered, "I reckon Bill Henderson he'll win out—less I go back 'n' jest nacherally kill him off."

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD PROSPECTOR'S FIND.

"Still, I reckon that wouldn't buy me much," he went on, "'less'n it'd be satisfaction. They's gittin' t' be too much law in this country—too much law."

Buck smiled dryly at me. By comparison with other regions known to us both, the Pinnacles, White Loco, and all that great area lying between the Missouri River and the Canada line was chiefly notable for absence of law—absence of law by no means denotes lawlessness, be it observed. If Colonel Colt became the arbitrating magistrate oftener than formally constituted courts, men were thereby less quick to wrangle over trivial matters, less quick to carry their differences to an issue before that grim adjudicator, whose decisions, once given, can never be reversed.

"Ain't it so?" the old man asked querulously. "Ain't we gittin' county courts 'n' sheriffs 'n' lawyers 'n' judges? They ain't on the job t' see that a mean cuss tends t' his own knittin'. But if somebody runs over yuh till yuh kain't stand it no longer, 'n' yuh up 'n' give him what he needs, don't they come a-runnin' t' make trouble fer you? Ain't it so? A man ain't got no right t' defend himself proper no more."

"Been having some trouble, dad?" Buck asked sympathetically.

"Waal—some," the old man returned briefly.

His pipe had burned to the heel. He tapped the ashes out in the palm of his gnarled old hand, his eyes still dwelling on the distant Pinnacle Range.

"I got a chance for a stake over yander." He pointed toward the mountains. "But I reckon mebbe I'll lose it. Kain't hold m' own no more—gittin' too old. That's why I come lookin' for Bobby Tarleton. I've knowed him since he was knee-high to a grasshopper. Prospected with his dad. I thought mebbe I'd git him t' go in with me. There'd be plenty fer both of us. 'N' Bob's a scrapper. He'd put the fear uh God in Bill Henderson with his two fists. I kain't handle m'self no more—'n' the play don't come right fer me to go after this party with a gun. But m' chances look slim, seein' Bob's pulled out."

"That sounds interesting," Buck said slowly. "Do I understand that this Bill

Henderson has run you out of the Pinnacles? What is it? A case of claim jumping?"

The old man straightened up, and a momentary flash brightened his dim eyes.

"Waal, I reckon he ain't run me out —yit. Nor he ain't jumped no claim yit. But, shucks"—he fell back into the apathetic, querulous tone—"I reckon he will. He's been fixin' to. He wants t' hog the whole thing. It's richer'n blazes."

"Placer—or rock?" Buck asked.

"Placer," the old man nodded. "Placer, 'n' a good un."

"Pretty good prospects, eh?" Buck pursued.

"Good!" the old man echoed. "I'll show yuh, boys, just how good she is."

He reached into the hip pocket of his overalls, and drew forth a narrow pouch of canvas.

"Gimme a piece uh paper, will yuh?" he requested.

I got him a sheet of a four months' old *River Press*. He pushed the dishes aside, and spread the paper on the table. Then he loosened the mouth of the pouch, and poured a measure of the contents on the paper. Buck and I crowded, silent, at his elbow.

There is a fascination about gold. It is the embodiment of so much that men sweat and struggle for. It is crystallized power. There is so much of Romance, and not a little of Tragedy, interwoven in its history. I had never before seen the precious metal in the raw. But the sight of the dull yellow stuff stirred my imagination. And, looking across at Buck, I saw that he, too, was regarding the gold with a fixed, reflective stare.

"Don't it look good, heh?" the old man grunted. "Forty years I bin huntin' this stuff—'n' findin' it off 'n' on. 'N' it makes me crazy t' think uh gittin' beat out uh my last chance. I'll never make another strike. I'm gittin' too old—too old."

Altogether there must have been near two pounds of the stuff, varying in size from minute flakes to nuggets the size of a pea. The old man took some up,

and let it trickle slowly through his fingers.

"Lord!" he sighed at length. "If I was just young 'n' husky, like you boys! Bill Henderson wouldn't have nothin' on me."

"I don't know much about placer work," Buck observed thoughtfully. "What sort of a deal are you mixed up in? And where does this Bill Henderson come in?"

"He don't come in," the old man growled. "He's jest nacherally mixin' in. I'll tell yuh about it. I'm just bustin' t' tell somebody."

He paused to refill his pipe.

"I come into the Pinnacles last summer," he began, after he had stoked up the brier. "Yuh can find colors on any creek in this country, yuh know. A long time back a feller told me about cleanin' up three thousand dollars in them mountains. That was in the Injun days, 'n' a bunch uh Assiniboines run him out, killin' his partner in the deal. He just got away with his hair 'n' that's all. He never went back—got drowned next year in the Gallatin. But I figured there's more where he got hisn—if he tells a straight yarn. That's quite a while ago. Finally I get around t' them Pinnacles. I prospects them creeks on the south side almighty careful. I ain't alone. There's mebbe two dozen men prospectin' through the range. Some of 'em's workin' fair claims."

The old prospector rolled a nugget under his forefinger, speaking more and more, as he unfolded his story, in the present tense:

"Finally, about September, I strike good dirt in a box cañon. There's three fellers workin' at the lower end. I go in above 'em—'n' hit this dirt. She goes four bits to the pan for a while. I don't say nothin', but stakes m' claim all regular, 'n' records it."

"These three fellers below me keeps washin' away. We git friendly, 'n' I tell 'em I got a good prospect. Bill Henderson he's one uh the three. First thing I know, Bill he's there alone. He buys out them other two fellers' claims

fer a song. Pretty soon there's three or four other fellers workin' down there. They stake claims, 'n' Bill buys 'em for next to nothin', 'n' keeps these fellers workin' for wages. They look to me like pilgrims, anyhow. But Bill he's no pilgrim.

"This goes along till she freezes up. Henderson has these fellers gittin' out timber 'n' buildin' a sluice that taps the water above me. This don't cut much figure—there's lots uh water. After this they're buildin' cabins. Pretty soon there's too much snow t' work, 'n' everybody lays off for the winter.

"Spring opens, 'n' after the first big water I'm at work with a rocker. There ain't much in sight. I just about make wages. But I figure it's there, all right. The longer I work the better it looks t' me.

"Looks kinda funny t' me—some things. I pan out a little stuff here 'n' there, but I don't see nothin' t' justify them all-fired big preparations Bill Henderson makes. He's spendin' money. He's got six or seven men t' work.

"Then one day I strike good dirt. I reckon I clean up four hundred in a week. All of a sudden she plays out. This sets me thinkin'. It's all come out uh one place close to a big, straight bank that looks t' me like she's mostly wash offn the mountain above. I figure the stuff's comin' off bed rock that's been buried under this bank some time when the creek bed changes her course. I go in under this bank far enough to show me I got the right hunch. I strike coarse gold again. But the bank keeps cavin' down, 'n' while I'm wonderin' how I'm goin' t' work it Bill Henderson ambles up 'n' makes a proposition t' buy m' claim. I ain't in with his proposition worth a cent, 'n' after talkin' hisself black in the face he lets up, allowin' the claim ain't worth a red nohow.

"In a day or two he's back again, makin' another talk. He's got capital behind him t' develop the cañon, 'n' my claim ain't worth two whoops to a poor man nohow. He'll give me two hundred 'n' fifty cash 'n' a steady job.

I'm a darned fool if I don't sell, because there ain't no gold on *my* claim.

"'What yuh want t' throw away good money on it for, then?' I asks.

"He allows *he* can use it in his business. But so do I, 'n' I ain't tellin' him what I got in sight. He gits pretty hostile because I don't take his offer. We have some words. He's a big, mean cuss, this Bill Henderson. He comes at me like he's goin' to eat me up. 'N' I lam him over the head with a shovel. He picks hisself up, considerable cooled off, 'n' goes away, makin' a war talk over his shoulder.

"After that he don't come near me no more. But things happen. I leave m' tools along the creek, 'n' they're gone in the mornin'. I lose grub outa the cabin while I'm workin' on the creek. Somebody smashes m' rocker with a ax. This makes me pretty sore, 'n' I go down 'n' tell Bill Henderson what I think uh him. I don't have no shovel handy, 'n' he jumps me 'n' beats me up some.

"This is two weeks back. Right away hell begins t' pop. I don't git no peace. There's rocks roll down outa the brush while I'm workin'. Bill Henderson he'll come 'n' stand on his own ground, just offn the line uh my claim, 'n' cuss me for a stubborn old fool, 'n' allow that he oughta beat me t' death. But once in a while he'll offer me five hundred for the claim. I ain't sellin', though. I hanker a whole lot t' take a shot at him, but he never packs a gun, 'n' I know if I kill him I'll shore git the worst of it.

"Finally one day I'm outa flour, 'n' have t' go t' the subagency tradin' post. While I'm gone they's a rock six foot through rolls down 'n' hits m' cabin, 'n' the old cabin she goes t' pieces like a cracker box.

"I comes back 'n' sizes up the wreck, 'n' climbs the hills to prognosticate about this here boulder's startin' point. 'N' while I'm up there Bill Henderson pops outa the brush, 'n' lights inta me like a wolf. He paws me around a whole lot. That's how I git this skinned face. He allows he'll beat me up every time he catches me offn m' claim.

"'N' that," the old man concluded, "is why I come lookin' for Bobby Tarleton. Bill Henderson he's a fist fighter. I ain't—I'm too old. Bill he don't never pack a gun, so I kain't git action on him thataway. I kain't shoot up a man that won't arm hisself, though mebbe I will if he keeps on. I figured that if I could git Bobby t' go in with me we'd git t' work the claim peaceable; there's a stake there, boys. But yuh say he's pulled plumb outa the country?"

"Yes, he's gone, all right, according to this U man. He wouldn't have any reason to lie about it," Buck returned.

The old man sat back and stroked his heavy white beard.

"I reckon I'll jes' have t' mosey back 'n' go it alone," he muttered. "It's pretty tough on a old man like me. I ain't never had good sense about money. I've made big stakes—'n' blowed 'em in. I'd like t' clean up enough this time t' go back home—I'm f'om Ioway—'n' take it easy fer what few years I got left. This here looks like m' last chance —'n' I ain't goin' to lay down for Bill Henderson nor nobody."

"Well, you don't need to be in a rush," Buck observed absently.

"I dunno, boys; I'd oughta be gittin' along," he mumbled.

"Stay over with us till to-morrow, anyhow," I urged. "The rest won't hurt you."

"All right, boys, thank you," he said. "I ain't none too chipper, 'n' that's a fact. I'm a-gittin' too old to buck a hard trail."

"Make yourself at home," Buck put in. "We have to take a jaunt along the creek. We'll be back about one or two o'clock."

With that we saddled up and struck out on our delayed morning ride.

A mile or so from the cabin Buck roused out of a thoughtful silence.

"I have a darned good mind to step into Bob Tarleton's shoes," he remarked. "I wonder if the old fellow really has a good claim? I'd be willing to tackle a dozen Bill Hendersons—if there was money in sight."

"Still figuring on that fifty thousand?" I inquired facetiously.

Buck scowled.

"That isn't any joke with *me*," he returned pointedly, and broke his horse into a lope.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO RODE THE GRAY HORSE?

Black Coulee wound like a sluggish serpent through the sage-grown and alkali-embittered plain. Ten days earlier the sinuous length of it was a death trap for weakened cattle that came to water there. But with the passing of the days the cattle took on strength, and the hot spring sun sucked up the treacherous moisture. We found no cattle bogged that day.

"This bog riding's about done," Buck remarked. We had drawn up our horses for a brief rest ten miles from the line camp.

"Looks like it," I agreed. "I wish they'd pull us into the home ranch."

He made no response to that, although it was the thing he had been wishing for only that morning, and presently we swung about and loped for home. Buck rode deep in thought, taciturn as an Indian. His reins dangled loose. Half the time, I am sure, he had no more than a hazy idea of his surroundings, or the direction we took, so immersed was he in his own thoughts. And I wondered much thereat. He had not been the same Buck Norris since the evening he came in from that flying trip to Loco, grumbling his need of an impossible sum of money—wherewith to lay a ghost.

It was two o'clock when we unsaddled at camp. The old man had spied us afar and started a fire. A pot of potatoes bubbled on the stove, and he was frying strips of bacon when we walked in.

And while we sat at the meal he had prepared, two horsemen jogged through the sage to our cabin. One was Art Homer, a deputy sheriff from White Loco. The other I did not know. I stuck my head out the door as they swung down at the well to let their horses drink.

"Put your stock in the stable," I yelled. "You're just in time to eat."

"You're on," the deputy returned my hail.

They stalked stiff-legged into the cabin, and fell wolfishly on the food we set before them. Their hunger appeased, they sat back. Homer got out his papers and tobacco.

"I was shore empty," he remarked.

It is bad policy to ask an officer his business in the range country. He may be after you or your friends. So we betrayed no curiosity. And Homer divulged his mission to Black Coulee in the next sentence.

"Plumb wild-goose chase now," he observed; and his companion muttered a laconic: "Looks that way."

"The Western Express was held up for forty thousand dollars night before last," the deputy went on. "You felers ain't happened to see a party on a gray hoss amblin' across country in the last twenty-four hours?"

"The old man here is the only person that has showed up here in a week," I replied carelessly.

But—a rider on a gray horse—and a train holdup for big money! I could not help swift, unbelievable conclusions. Nor could I help flashing a look at Buck. He sat behind the deputy, his chair tilted against the wall, blowing smoke rings from a cigarette. Nothing was troubling him. He caught my look, and bestowed a deliberate wink on me.

"Forty thousand dollars! That was quite a haul," he commented. "I woudln't mind that wad myself. But what makes you think they's out this way? Out in this flat country, where you can spot a jack rabbit at five miles? I'd imagine they'd go south, to the mountains, or the rough country along the river."

"Well, yes, a man would naturally think so," Homer responded. "But they didn't—or, rather, he didn't. This was a one-man play."

"The devil!" Buck exclaimed. "One man hold up a train, and get away with it? That's going some!"

"I should say," the deputy grinned. "The old boy had nerve. But he done

it single-handed, all right, all right. He pulled it off at the curve leadin' to the Windy Bridge—you know the place—right below the bench where the old Figure Four hoss corrals used to be. The engineer relates how he whipped around the curve, sees a red light an' a fire. He pulled up *pronto*. The conductor an' the train crew goes up to investigate. The red lantern is sittin' in the middle of the track, an' the bridge is afire. It don't amount to much, and while they're puttin' it out this feller gets in his fancy work.

"They didn't have no idea of a hold-up till somebody noticed the door of the express car partly open. They hollered in to the messenger. He didn't answer, an' when they went in they found him laid out on the floor an' the safe door swingin' wide. When they got him to, all he could tell was that while he was peekin' out to see what's the trouble he found a gun stuck under his nose, an' a masked man climbs into the car. This feller orders him to open the safe. He refuses, an' this feller, still-holdin' the gun on him, eases the point of a knife into his back an inch or so, threatenin' to shove it clear through. So the messenger weakened, an' opens the safe. This holdup then bats him over the head with his gun. That's all for Mr. Messenger."

"Night before last, if yuh recollect, was moonlight—almost as bright as day. An' about the time they get all this out of the messenger somebody hollers 'There he goes!' Sure enough, on top of the bank two or three hundred yards off there's a feller straddle of a big gray hoss driftin' to beat the Dutch. A brakeman grabbed a pistol an' took a shot at him. He let a war whoop an' sent back a bullet or two. An' by that time he was over the brow of the hill an' out uh sight. An' there yuh are."

"I expect they're lookin' high, wide, an' handsome by now," Homer concluded. "But me 'n' Bill here we was first on the spot, an' picked up his trail fresh. It run straight north. We lost it about ten or twelve miles from here—southeast. Mixed in with a big bunch

uh range hosses. He's a smooth hombre, all right."

"If you had a bunch of men scattered out through here," Buck observed, "I don't see how he could get away—in this flat country."

"Too much start," Homer declared. "He was well mounted. I'd like to come up with him, you bet. I expect the railroad'll offer a couple uh thousand reward. But it's a slim chance now—unless he stubs his toe some way. He might be fool enough to drop into some uh these cow towns, flashin' a big roll. However, we got to keep tryin'. Can yuh stake us to a fresh mount? The county'll make it right with the outfit."

We had twelve head of saddle horses in the field back of the stable. Buck drove them in, and we gave the deputies two good ones. Buck's big gray circled in the corral with the others, the sweat marks glaringly apparent. I saw Homer size the horse up casually, but he said nothing. Gray saddle horses are common enough. And Buck seemed quite indifferent.

As they mounted, Homer asked an apparently idle question:

"You fellers been in town lately?"

He looked straight at Buck as he spoke.

"Pretty near a week now, isn't it?" Buck responded. "You ought to know—I beat you out of two pounds of Durham shaking dice that day. No, we've been earning our wages lately."

"Well," Homer admonished, "keep your eye peeled for that holdup party. So long."

We stood watching them ride away. The horses were stringing along the inside of the fence toward the lower end of the field, where the grass was good. Homer carried a field glass on his belt. I saw him unsling it and put it to his eyes, and I was willing to bet a month's wages he was sizing up the gray horse with the new-dried sweat stains upon him.

I turned to Buck. He was rolling himself a cigarette and smiling inscrutably.

"Art Homer's no fool," I blurted

out. "He's not saying all he knows. Do you see what he's looking at through the glass?"

"Well," Buck returned, still smiling, "what about it?"

"Why, hang it——" I began, and then shrugged my shoulders. If he were going to take that stand with me—it was none of my business, anyway. I turned and walked to the cabin, where our gray-bearded guest had already begun to wash the dishes, and helped him complete that task. Then I lay down on my bunk. The old man went outside. I saw Buck pass the window. For a long time after that I heard the intermittent drone of voices. Then I fell asleep. It was sundown, and Buck was yelling "Supper!" in my ear when I awakened.

Dusk came down, and we sat outside in the cool of the evening, listening to the song of the coyotes and the deep bass of the frogs along the creek. Except for these sounds, the great hush of the plains lay heavy, a stillness that can almost be felt. The dark lay on us for an hour, and then the moon slid up above the sky line, and the gray plains spread in a silvery glow devoid of shadow, for there was neither bush nor tree nor hillock to throw a shadow in all that huge waste. The sage spread away unbroken, the drear loneliness of it, so manifest in the glare of the sun, was softened, made beautiful, by the magic of the moonbeams.

Buck was first to break the spell with words.

"I'm going south to the Pinnacles with the old man to-morrow," he said abruptly. "You better throw in with us, Dave, and come along."

"Are you?" I said. "Well, I wish you luck. But I don't think I'll go along. I don't like to jump the outfit like that; anyway, I may not be much force as a cow hand, but I'd be less as a miner."

"Fiddlesticks!" he exclaimed. "Why, you——"

He stopped suddenly, and, clasping his hands over his knees, stared out over the sage.

"It's a chance t' make a stake, boys,"

the old man mumbled at my elbow. "Best chance I ever see."

I made no comment on that. Viewed calmly, I could see no advantage to myself in quitting a job that I was reasonably sure of to embark on an adventure such as the old prospector suggested—a private war with Bill Henderson, whoever he might be. And in my heart I did not believe Buck wanted me to go. His offer seemed rather perfunctory. I did not believe he meant to go into the Pinnacles—unless he went on the dodge. I could not get it out of my head that Buck Norris was due to quit the country as soon as he could. Circumstantial evidence seemed to me rather convincing just then. And I hoped he would make it. I knew the caliber of the man well enough to know that his need must have been great—and I could not but admire the nerve of him.

So much for my thoughts. We went to bed shortly after that. At daybreak Buck got his two private horses out of the pasture, saddled one, and lashed a blanket on the other so that the old man could ride. His bed he stowed on the old prospector's pack horses. Then they shook hands with me, and struck out the Loco trail.

CHAPTER V. BUCK'S SISTER.

In the range country a man sometimes changes base suddenly, and for trifling cause. He does not stay "put," anchored to a job or a locality, as he is perforce compelled to do in older, more staid communities. Witness Bobby Tarleton—he whom the old prospector sought—jumping in the most casual way from close to the Canada line to a region six hundred miles south, all on the spur of the moment.

Which is merely by way of preliminary to saying that ten days after Buck's departure for the Pinnacles I was on the pay roll of a horse outfit a hundred miles from the Bar-L camp line. I had no logical reason for quitting, one might say. But after Buck

left I spent three blank, lonesome days of idleness, and then took my string of horses and rode into the home ranch without waiting for orders to that effect. The range boss was grumbling because Buck had left on the verge of the spring work. He growled causelessly because I didn't stay alone at the line camp, where there was no need of any one staying; and in the midst of his complaining I asked for my wages, and the Bar-L was immediately short another rider of more or less dubious qualifications.

I don't know what might have happened had I stayed where I was. Nothing probably. And in any case speculation of that sort is unsatisfactory. But I did not stay. From White Loco I bore eastward without any definite destination, and this horse outfit gathered me in—they being short-handed. The cranky old bachelor who owned the outfit at once took a violent fancy to me. And before I had been with him a week he put a bunch of horses and two men in my charge, and started me out to deliver them at a place under the very shadow of the Rockies, whence a grading contractor had sent him a hurry-up call for work stock. We were to trail up, deliver the horses, and come back on the train.

This task I accomplished in due time. As soon as the bunch was off our hands my two horse jinglers elected to get riotously drunk. For a wonder, I was not in on the celebration. Perhaps the bit of responsibility served to keep me straight. For the first time in many moons, I took a drink or two, and stopped at that. And since there was no use in my waiting on them, I left their transportation in the hands of the station agent to give them when they were ready, and took the next train home.

From Chapell, where I boarded the eastbound, to my destination beyond White Loco was an overnight run. So I treated myself to the luxury of a Pullman berth. I had on a decent suit, and I felt like a white man. But the mark of the range was on me plain enough, for after an hour's riding an old, white-

mustached gentleman in the opposite seat leaned over and began a conversation with a remark about the contrast about the sudden change from mountains to prairie. The change was abrupt enough to excite wonder, all right. There were no foothills. The plains rolled up to the foot of the great ranges, and the mountains rose suddenly, like a wall.

"You are a stockman, I take it?" he observed, after a little.

"Of a sort," said I. "In a salaried capacity. I'm not lucky enough to have cattle on a thousand hills."

"Ah, well," said he, "you're young yet, and this West seems to be the land of opportunity."

"Chiefly lost opportunities, so far as I've been concerned," I returned lightly.

He smiled at that.

"If I were young again," he declared, "and it were necessary for me to acquire a competence, I believe out here in this big country is where I should make the effort. I feel as it is that I have missed a great deal by not seeing more of the West. It is not petty, nor cramped, nor utterly conventionalized. A man could easily secure independence here, I think. Personally I inherited, as a young man, sufficient for all my needs. But I have a son who has been very successful out West. He is in cattle down in Wyoming."

"I've rambled across certain parts of Wyoming," I remarked casually. "In fact, my first range riding was done on Powder River."

"Indeed?" said he. "Then you may have come across my son. Norris is the name—E. B. Norris."

"E. Buckingham Norris?" I inquired carelessly, never once thinking that I might hit the mark. I was smiling at the idea of Buck Norris being the son of this palpable aristocrat even as I uttered the words.

"The very same," he returned quickly. "I perceive that you have known of Edward. Well, well! After all, it is not so strange. You Western men move about a great deal."

"We do that," I assented guardedly. Then I went on to tell the first plau-

sible lie that rose to my lips. If the old gentleman had the impression that Buck Norris was by way of being a cattle king, it was not for me to betray the fact that his son was worthless driftwood like myself. "But I can't say that I ever really knew your son. I know of him, and I met him a few times on the range. It's rather an uncommon name, and I remembered it, however."

"Old family name," he returned. "It has come down through several generations. There was a time when I thought Edward would never be a creditable bearer of it. But I dare say we all have our wild periods when we are young and the blood runs faster. This big country has done a great deal for my son. Do you know, Mr. Allard, we old fellows of the East and South—the Norrises have lived in Maryland since Revolutionary times—have only a vague idea of the national area and resources. Most of us know Europe a great deal better than our own country. Take myself. I have never before traveled west of the Mississippi, and I have always thought of this Far Western section as fit only for semi-barbarians. This journey, which I took as a matter of necessity, has unfolded some wonderful territory to me, has changed my point of view amazingly. In some of the coast cities—notably San Francisco—I found a degree of culture and a people that rank with the best of the nation. And back of the cities lies a land that is astonishingly rich. A man can make his fortune out here and keep his hands clean."

"In general, that's true enough," I replied. "But it isn't quite so simple as it looks—this getting on one's feet financially out here. If you were pitchforked into this country with no practical experience, and nothing for capital but your two hands and some bad habits and expensive tastes, you'd find yourself up against a hard proposition, as we say out here. But I think it's true also that the East generally underestimates us and our resources. I was brought up on the Atlantic seaboard myself, but I've seen enough of the West to know that the chances are here,

and that a finer type of man and woman than the West breeds is hard to find. Perhaps here and there the polish is lacking, but the more sterling qualities more than make up for that."

"Very true, very true," he agreed.
"I should say——"

Whatever he was about to say was interrupted by a rustle of skirts, and a tall young woman brushed into the seat beside him. The old gentleman rose like the cavalier he was by breeding, and the habits of former days reasserted themselves in me to the extent of following his example. He indicated me with a gesture.

"Dorothy," he said, "here is a gentleman of the cattle country who has met Edward. Mr. Allard, my daughter."

She flashed a queer look at me—a glance which seemed to hold a fleeting expression of fear. But it was brief, and she masked it instantly with a bow and a polite murmur as she took her seat.

Even if I had not heard the name, I think I should have guessed her to be blood kin to Buck Norris. The resemblance was striking, save that in her certain angularities peculiar to Buck were softened by her sex. But she had the same keen eyes, and Buck's curved mouth. And, watching her covertly, I could detect familiar little tricks of expression common to him certain similarities of gesture.

Taking her by and large, Miss Dorothy Norris was a person of decided individuality. There are women who can never be classed as belonging to the great average, no matter how casual one's notice of them may be. They have too much of that indefinable atmosphere which, for want of a clearer term, is summed up as personality. I judged her age to be twenty-four or thereabouts. And it may serve to illustrate what manner of impression she made on me when I say that I cannot remember a single detail of her dress—albeit I retain a vivid picture of her face, like some tropical flower against the dark green of the cushions.

We drifted into conversation on general topics. I had been out of the world

—their world—so long that small talk was beyond me; and she was not the sort of woman to whom a man could patter the conventional nothings. But we got along famously, for all that. Although I had gone to the dogs in the West, that was my own weakness; and deep in my heart I loved the wide roll of the plains, with its mysterious distances, where a man could look a hundred miles to an unbroken horizon. So presently I was fairly going, telling her all the details of a cow-puncher's life, and trying my best to make her see the lure and charm of it, the thing that held men to it despite the crudities, the hardships, and the loose living that inevitably results where men verge close upon a primitive mode of existence.

Once or twice the old gentleman asked pointed questions about my meetings with his son, and I lied to the best of my ability. And once my tongue slipped, and I spoke of "Buck," whereat I saw again that swift expression of fear cross her face. It made me wonder. How could she associate "Buck" with E. Buckingham Norris? But I grew a trifle more guarded in my speech.

We saw the sun slip down behind the vanishing Rockies, and shortly after that came the last call from the diner. And that ended our conversation. The Norrises went to dinner. I had had mine.

In the dusk of evening the train made a twenty-minute stop at a division point. I was on my way back to the smoker, and decided to take my cigarette in the open air in preference to the drummer-infested compartment. So I got down and sauntered the length of the platform. The railroad company kept a cage containing two grizzly bears just past the depot end, and a great many of the passengers flocked thither to exclaim over *U. horribilis*. A few of them stared at me in my white hat and high-heeled boots, as if I, too, were part of the collection of local curiosities, and to escape this I walked a little way farther, and turned my back on them.

I stood by the platform rail, looking

over to the single street of Cutbank, where divers groups of saddled cow horses stood before the various saloons. By this token I knew that some round-up must have pulled close to the town, and I was debating with myself whether or not to go over and get a drink and see if I could run across any riders I knew, when some one spoke at my elbow:

"Do you find the view absorbing, Mr. Allard?"

I turned to see Miss Dorothy Norris regarding me with an interest she had failed to manifest in the Pullman—a frankly critical stare—and she coolly continued her scrutiny of me, meeting my eyes with perfect composure. I have never been greatly troubled with self-consciousness in the presence of any woman, but I found myself rapidly becoming so under that keen gaze.

"I do now," I finally managed to retort.

A slow smile drifted across her face.

"You're out of practice, Mr. Allard," she remarked composedly. "That was a rather crude attempt."

"Perhaps it was," I admitted. "I don't think I ever was a good hand at that sort of thing."

"I quite believe you," she replied.

"You have a pretty gift of sarcasm," I observed. "It's a family characteristic, isn't it?"

"You should know," she returned, "if your powers of observation are up to normal."

"I should know?" I echoed blankly.

"Surely," she smiled again. "But I don't see why we should quarrel about it. On the contrary, I came up here purposely to thank you for a very discreet—er—prevarication."

"Which is simply a polite way of telling me that I am a liar," I said ironically, and a trifle angrily. "Thanks—though I am still in the dark as to the nature of the—er—prevarication."

"Let's stop sparring," she said bluntly. "I know all about Ed and his dissipations and general worthlessness—all about the mythical cattle ranch in Wyoming, and the rest of it. So do you. I merely wished to thank you

for not destroying my father's most cherished illusion. It is based on a shameful piece of deception, and I think it would break his heart to know that Ed had deceived him—and that I had helped him through no fault of my own. It was kind of you to keep up the sham—you could so easily have exposed it. I want to ask you to continue being as discreet in your speech for the rest of our journey together. If he dreamed that Ed was in the neighborhood of White Loco, which we pass through tomorrow morning, I believe, he would insist on stopping over; and I can't bear to think of the result."

"I don't think your caution was at all necessary," I replied wonderingly. "I don't know anything about your brother's affairs, and if I did I certainly would not gossip about him to any one—much less his relatives."

"I admire your way of backing up a friend," she said gravely. "But Ed has been making me his father confessor lately, and I happen to know that you do know more than you seem willing to admit. Possibly I could tell you a great many things about my brother which you know are true, and which you might not like to hear. Because you must have known him pretty well for the last year—at least you spent the winter together. But the main point is to keep my father in ignorance that Ed has deceived him. It may be necessary for him to know soon enough. I only hope that can be averted. And I do appreciate your tact in not blurting out the sordid truth when my father spoke of his successful son."

"Well," said I moodily, "I think Buck Norris would do as much for me. And there are people I'd hate to have know that I've made such an awful foozle of my life as I have done out here."

"You don't even make any excuses for it, either," she said, in a puzzled tone. "That is one thing I have noticed about Western men—you are all so amazingly open and aboveboard about your weaknesses and vices."

"It's the atmosphere," I answered lightly. "This winelike air on the plains. It goes to a man's head, I think."

If he goes to the devil out here he goes with bells on, and is seldom either repentant or ashamed—unless some one else gets hurt in the wreck."

"That's the pity of it," she murmured. "Some one else always does get hurt."

"Not always," I defended. "Some of us can hurt no one but ourselves, and that's on our own heads."

"It's a pity," she murmured to herself.

"And pity 'tis 'tis true,'" I quoted. But she did not seem to catch what I said.

She stood tapping the rail for a minute, gazing away at the dusky plains beyond the little town.

"Are you going to be in Ed's neighborhood before long?" she asked abruptly.

"Possibly," I returned, with a mental reservation. It was possible, though very unlikely.

"I want to send him a message, and I have found that mail sometimes doesn't reach him for weeks and weeks," she said. "Will you deliver a letter for me? It seems a good deal to ask, but I have a word or two for him that he should get soon."

"I'll be very glad to see that he gets any message you have to send," I replied. I think that if she had asked me just then to hunt Buck up and lead him in by the ear, I should have promised to do it. A man may be a fool in his readiness to gratify a woman's wishes. But I have observed that few men have the nerve to refuse when a woman asks a personal favor, no matter how much labor or risk or trouble may be involved. And it had been many a day since a woman of her type had asked anything of me, had considered me as worth the asking. I am not by nature one who rushes to the aid of damsels in distress, but I could realize that Dorothy Norris was not setting me a task unless she had need.

The lights were by now beginning to break out along the street, and the time allotted for the stop having expired, we made our way back to the coach, reach-

ing it just as the conductor yelled "All aboard!"

"I'll give you a letter some time this evening," she muttered, as we ascended the steps.

The old gentleman was in his seat, perusing a magazine. He glanced over his spectacles as we came in, and went on reading. Miss Norris kept on to the writing compartment in the observation car, and I sat down and fell to staring through the window into the night.

While the porter made up my berth I took a vacant seat behind them, and presently a letter slid over the head rest. I put it in my pocket without looking to see whence it came. Half an hour later I was in bed, trying to go to sleep. Shortly after sunrise I left the train at my station east of White Loco. Neither Dorothy Norris nor her father was astir. But as I stood watching the train pull out, a woman's hand fluttered briefly through a car window. There was neither rhyme nor reason in it; nevertheless, I turned away quickly, with a swift pang of loneliness.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH A LETTER TO DELIVER.

Not till I was straddle of a horse and ambling toward the Porter ranch did I fully realize that I had undertaken quite a task in behalf of Dorothy Norris. I was under wages, and the scene of my work lay more than a hundred miles in an air line from the Pinnacle Range—even granting that I should find Buck there, of which I had no assurance. In justice to myself, I hated to quit a good job merely to deliver a letter which might or might not be important. The spring work was well under way, and the chances were good that old man Porter would say "Not on your life!" if I asked for a week or ten days' lay-off to go on a private wild-goose chase. However, I had undertaken to do the thing, and I meant to keep my promise. And it looked to me as I rode along as if I had only one choice should Porter refuse to

let me go, and that was to throw up another job, and go about my own business.

But upon arriving at my destination I found that chance had stepped in to arrange my comings and goings to my own convenience. Old man Porter had fallen off his horse and crippled himself to the extent of requiring hospital treatment. Wherefore a nephew was in charge—a beardless youth, who had filled my place with a man of his own choice. When I turned over the contractor's receipt for the horses he handed me a check for what was due me, whereupon I promptly saddled my private mount for departure to other fields of activity.

This made it an easy matter. All I had to do was to find Buck and deliver his sister's message, then hunt me another job. I had a few dollars in my pocket, two good horses to carry me and my few belongings, and all the world before me. So I pointed my nag straight for the Pinnacles, riding through the far-flung sage in the drowsy heat with my mind at ease.

I made a ranch that night and the next, and afternoon of the third day found me riding into the rolling foot of the mountains. Now, the matter of finding Buck Norris and the old prospector was not altogether simple. The Pinnacles covered an area fifty miles in diameter—the wildest jumble of rocky peaks and forbidding cañons it has ever been my lot to wander in. I did not know one peak from another, nor where the trails ran, nor even whether there were trails or no. All I knew of the country was that an Indian reservation took in the north slope, and that a solitary ranch or two lay somewhere in the least rugged part of the range. I had to go it blind. My principal guide was a recollection that the old prospector had spoken of striking pay dirt in a box cañon on the south side. So around to the southern slope I bore with a little food that I had rustled at the last ranch tied on my pack horse.

I spent two days searching the south-running cañons before I encountered a human being or any sign of one. Then,

quite unexpectedly, I stumbled on a cabin occupied by two long-haired individuals who set me on the right track. The place I sought was some ten miles farther to the west. They had wintered there, wolf hunting, and they knew the cañon where Bill Henderson and the white-haired prospector had their claims.

I stayed with them overnight, and at sunrise took a bald peak for bearing, and headed for what I hoped would be the end of my search. After endless scrambling down sharp hills and wearisome climbing up the opposite acclivities, I came at length on a narrow path fresh marked by the hoofs of shod horses, and this led me by devious ways into Bill Henderson's camp.

That is, I judged it to be his camp by the new-built cabins and a small box sluice which came from somewhere up the little stream. There was not a soul in sight, nor did any one answer my hail. So I passed on. The walls of the cañon drew in as I ascended until I rode in a perfect trap of a gorge, where the sun could find bottom only at high noon. Above me the cliffs towered sheer as the sides of a city skyscraper. The hoofs of my horses clinking on the stony bed rang and echoed like footsteps in a vault. Then the gorge widened suddenly, falling away on the north side in a slope that a man could climb with more or less effort; and in this opening I came to the ruined cabin of the old prospector, and the huge boulder which had caused the wreck.

I yelled. Then I circled the cabin. Of the old man or Buck Norris there was no sign. It was just about as forlorn and lonesome a place as I had found in the whole range. If gold was usually found in God-forsaken territory, there should be plenty there, I thought.

"Well," I grumbled to myself, "this is a devil of a note! I suppose there's no telling where I'll find Buck Norris."

There was nothing to indicate that any one had camped there inside of a week or two. I looked all around, and decided that Buck and the old man had either come, and left straightway for

some reason, or else had never gotten there at all. Wherefore I concluded that I might as well head for White Loco, and find out when they had passed through there, and which way they had headed.

Meantime it was nearing noon, and I was hungry. I staked my horses on the grass by the creek bed, and built me a fire to boil my coffeepot. My own meal was soon prepared and eaten, but I wanted my horses to fill up. And so while they grazed I sauntered idly along the cañon bottom to the place where pick and shovel marks showed that some one had been at work. The old man or some one had left a tin pail lying there, and while I stood looking curiously at the signs of gold seeking and wondering if in reality a fortune did lie under that bank of sediment and gravel a most surprising thing happened. The tin bucket suddenly leaped two feet in the air; there was a dull spat at the same instant, and small particles of dirt flew in all directions.

This was barely ten feet away. Far up the mountainside I heard the report bandied back and forth among the peaks.

Now, I had never in my life been deliberately shot at. I am free to confess that my heart gave a great bound, and then stood still for a beat or two. I turned and stared up the hill, wondering if there were more to follow. Sure enough, in a second or two—*phut!* Another bullet struck a few feet from the first. I knew then that it was no stray shot from some careless hunter. I was too much in the open. Whoever was indulging in that rifle practice knew he had a man for a mark—and I had a hunch that he was simply, having some fun with me rather than shooting to kill.

I was unarmed. My six-shooter lay beside my saddle. And a six-gun is a poor weapon at long range. Besides, even if I'd had it on me, there was no one in sight to open fire on. The bull pine on the mountains masked the shooter. So I swiftly concluded that that was no place for me to linger, and got hastily back to my horses, wonder-

ing all the time if I were due to get a bullet in the small of my back, and wondering still more why any one should want to shoot *me* up in that bushwhacking fashion.

I cut short my horses' grazing, packed up, saddled, and rode down the cañon. The more I thought of the incident the angrier I got. But I could see nothing for it save to retire discreetly, and leave the cañon to the man with the rifle.

This time as I neared the Henderson camp I heard the murmur of voices. The flat on which the cabins were reared was of soft, springy turf, whereon the hoofs of my horses gave forth no sound. The noon wind droning up the cañon muffled the faint clink of my bridle chains and the squeak of saddle leather. Which accounts, I suppose, for the fact that they did not discover my approach. They were both talking loudly, and I checked my horses to listen when I caught part of a sentence.

"I'll sure call that feller down, just the same, when he gets in," one said. "I won't have no such fool plays made around here."

I could hear the other guffaw foolishly.

"Shucks! Yuh said to keep anybody from prowlin' around in the cañon, didn't yuh?" he answered. "What's the difference? By gum, it was funny t' see that feller jump. Could yuh see it, Bill? Old Dave shot mighty close, it looked t' me."

"I don't want nothin' like that no more—see?" the first voice continued. "There's other ways. If Steve's as drunk as you are, he might 'a' hit the feller. Then there would be hell to pay. I'll see that you get no more whisky in this camp if it's goin' to make you fellers go plumb crazy. D'yuh think I want it advertised around the country that a man can't ride in here without bein' shot at? That would knock the whole thing in the head."

The other growled back some unintelligible reply, and I urged my horses forward, since I was none too sure of what might happen if they caught me eavesdropping. Evidently some sort of

crooked business was to the fore, but I was not in the humor to do any sleuthing just then. It was not my funeral, so to speak.

I suppose they were expecting me down the creek on my way out, for neither man seemed particularly surprised when I rode around the cabin end. One was seated on a block, wearing a very sour expression, and pulling at a stubby brown mustache—a big-bodied, beefy man, with an astonishingly red face. The other man was busy wiping out a rifle. On the ground between them lay the carcass of a fresh-killed deer.

"Hello!" said I.

"Howdy?" the two of them greeted.

"Say," I slipped over in my saddle and asked casually, "isn't there an old, white-whiskered fellow prospecting somewhere around here? Wintered in this part of the Pinnacles, I'm told."

"I guess yuh mean old man Way," the man on the block replied. "Old jasper with white hair, kinda stooped, been a pretty big man in his time?"

"That's the man," said I.

"Yes, he prospected through here," the red-faced man continued. "Wintered up the cañon a ways. Had a claim right above me. But it wasn't worth a cent. A man couldn't pan enough gold in this cañon to keep him in tobacco. Old man Way pulled out quite a while ago. Got sick uh the Pinnacles. I don't know where he headed for."

"That so?" I remarked. "What's the best way to get out of here to head for White Loco?"

"Why, yuh follow this trail up the sidehill and over the ridge there," he pointed the way, "till yuh drop into the next cañon. That'll lead yuh out on top of the divide. Then yuh'll see the subagency at the foot of the mountains. There's no trail down. Yuh have to pick your way."

"I guess I'll hit the trail, then," said I. "Thanks."

"Say," the other man spoke up, "I got a quart uh rye here, stranger. Have a shot before yuh go. It's a long time

between drinks some time in this rough country."

"No, thanks," I returned pointedly; "I just had a couple of shots up the cañon. I guess that'll hold me for a while."

He had set his rifle against the cabin wall and moved a step or two toward me, hauling forth a quart bottle from his hip pocket as he did so, and I could see that he was pretty well lit up with whisky. Not enough to affect him to any great extent, but nevertheless he was good-naturedly drunk. At my reply he grinned broadly, and bestowed on me a slow wink, as if he thought it a great joke. But the big man, who, I felt sure, was Bill Henderson himself—and to whom I took instant and positive dislike—scowled blackly.

"Well, so long," said I, and giggled up my mount.

"Better stop over to-night," Henderson proposed. "I got lots uh room here. It's a long ways across them mountains, and ranches is blame scarce."

"Oh, I've got grub and a bed," said I—and kept on going.

As I climbed the steep trail that slanted up the side of the cañon I had a clear view of the camp for fully half an hour. It lay directly under me, the cabins dwarfed by the height, and the two men mere pygmies moving about. As I neared the top I saw a third figure come walking down the cañon bottom. This I took to be the Steve mentioned, and presumably the individual who had thrown lead so recklessly in my immediate vicinity. I felt distinctly put out over that proceeding. It hurts a man's pride to be scared out of a place in that uncalled-for fashion. But there was nothing to be gained by returning to precipitate a row with that ruffianly trio. So I kept on through the timber, which presently shut off all sight of the cañon, and bore up for the top of the Pinnacle Range.

In the fullness of time I passed the subagency, and struck across the sixty miles of level sagebrush that lay between the Pinnacles and White Loco. The storekeeper at the subagency remembered old man Way. But he had

not seen him since he passed through there more than three weeks before with the fresh marks of conflict on his face.

Nor did I grow much wiser concerning the possible whereabouts of Buck Norris and his ancient companion when I reached town. But I was not long in learning something which disturbed me not a little—disturbed me on Buck's account mostly, but partly on my own, threatening as it did to involve me in disagreeable proceedings. I had stabled my horses, and was on my way to the only restaurant White Loco boasted when I encountered Art Homer in front of the Red Bull Saloon.

"Hello, Dave!" he hailed, and followed this with an invitation to take a drink, which I accepted, partly from force of habit, and partly because I was fresh off a hard trail, which is prone to breed a thirst.

We stood by the bar talking for several minutes. A cow-puncher or two and a certain quota of town loungers joined us, but were presently drawn to a poker game in progress at the other end of the room, leaving Homer and myself alone. Following the universal custom, I bought a drink. Homer slowly emptied his glass. Then, in the most offhand manner, he said to me:

"Where do yuh suppose Buck had been to that time he rode the gray hoss to a whisper?"

And I, caught all unaware, my mind busy with other things, replied absently:

"Hanged if I know where he was."

He grinned widely.

"Sure?" he asked.

"What the mischief are you driving at?" I demanded, though it flashed upon me at once what he meant, and what a slip I had made.

"You know, all right," he returned good-naturedly.

"I sure don't," said I.

"Well, just think a while," he told me. "And recollect this: There's three thousand dollars reward for the man who robbed that express train. That's worth going after. I'd be willing to split it."

"Blood money," I sneered.

"Coin's coin," he observed laconically.

"Look here, Homer," I said shortly, "you're an officer, and your business is rounding up criminals. My business is rounding up long-horn cattle. Every man to his trade."

"All right, Dave," he said carelessly, "if that's the way you see it. But look out for yourself."

"Why?" I demanded.

"Oh, no why," he laughed. "No use of us gettin' personal. But, say, have you any idea where Buck Norris is now?"

"I haven't," I answered truthfully. "I wish I did know. I want to see him."

"Well, when you find him, let me know. I'll buy for the house, believe me," he smiled. "On the square, I think you'll hunt a long time in this country."

"Oh, stuff!" said I—and went off to get my supper in the greasy little restaurant, where, despite its forbidding appearance, one could get a far better meal than at the Loco Hotel. But just the same I was beginning to think that Homer might be right. However, it made no difference to me. If Buck had skipped the country with forty thousand in plunder—which Homer certainly inferred—naturally I would not be able to deliver his sister's letter. But I meant to have a good try.

CHAPTER VII.

PARTNERS.

Art Homer's prediction, however, proved incorrect in the long run. All I learned in White Loco was that Buck and old man Way had left town on the south trail. Now, I had come in on the south trail, but I had come direct, and I remembered that some twenty miles out a cow ranch lay in a hollow half an hour's ride from the subagency road. So I determined to go at the thing in proper sleuth fashion by finding out if they had passed there or stopped. The only way to make sure was to go there

and see. Wherefore in the morning I turned my face south again.

Ten miles or so from White Loco I met a Bar-L man driving a bunch of horses. We stopped to make a friendly smoke and augur a while. He had been on an Indian round-up, he told me, all around the west foot of the Pinnacles.

"You didn't run across Buck Norris anywhere lately?" I asked.

"Sure did," he replied. "Seen Buck day before yesterday. He's camped with some old feller on Rawhide, right where she comes out into the sage."

Thus I was set on a direct trail at last. The Bar-L man told me further how to reach Rawhide Creek. Then we shook hands and went our separate ways.

I pushed my horses across the hot, dry plains all day and far into the shank of the evening, a parching south wind blowing straight in my teeth till my lips were like to crack. On the first water flowing out of the Pinnacles I made camp. And at dawn I boiled a pot of coffee, and urged my leg-weary horses on toward Rawhide, which was well marked by a great, flat-topped butte where it debouched upon the plain. I dropped into the bed of the creek, and followed its course, and about ten o'clock raised the white flutter of a tent by some quaking aspens. Ten minutes later I was shaking hands with Buck Norris. Old man Way sat in the shade, propped against a roll of bedding. He croaked a hoarse greeting.

"What's the matter, old-timer?" I asked. "You look pretty much under the weather."

"I been mighty sick—mighty sick, I tell yuh," he said.

"He sure has," Buck observed. "I thought once he was due to cash in. But old man Way is tough, tougher than whalebone. He'll be as good as ever he was in a little while."

"I've had the devil's own time finding you," said I.

"Yes?" Buck smiled. "Well, you've found me. So pull the rigging off your stock, and tarry a while."

He helped me strip off the horses

and picket them. Then I handed him the letter.

"Here," said I, "is what has had me prowling the length and breadth of the range for a week."

He looked at the handwriting, and then at me, and turned the letter over two or three times with a dumfounded stare that was comical to see. But he did not ask how I came by it. So I told him briefly of the meeting on the train, leaving out the details, except, of course, his sister's request that I deliver the letter.

"And there you are," I finished. "I promised to see that you got it, and I've done so. After you've read it, and I've eaten some of the bacon and beans every camp should have in stock, I'm going to put a bug in your ear about our friend Art Homer."

"Oh, hang Art Homer!" said he. "But you have had a sure enough ride with this letter. I'm awfully obliged. That sounds pretty weak, but it's sincere, Dave."

"Forget it," I returned lightly. "It's all in the game. A few days or a few miles cuts no figure with me. I'm not working."

I walked off, and left him to read his letter. Old man Way's instinctive hospitality had stirred him to build a fire. But I saw at a glance that, whatever had been the nature of his illness, he was not yet very steady on his legs, and I made him sit still while I attended to my own wants.

"I might as well cook for the three of us, eh?" I said to the old fellow. "It's getting on for noon."

"I reckon yuh might as well, son, if yuh feel like it," he agreed. "We had breakfast tol'able early ourselves. Gimme a bucket uh spuds, an' I'll peel 'em. An', say, they's a mess uh larrupin' fine trout in a pan by the creek yander. That there Buck he's a shore 'nough fisherman."

I found the trout, all right, and prepared them for the pan. And while we thus divided the labor of cooking Buck came up and took a hand.

Presently the food was ready. I ate my fill of those delicious, pink-fleshed

trout—the most toothsome morsel that swims in water, if he be properly rolled in flour and fried over open coals—and when my hunger was appeased sat with my back against the bole of a tree and rolled a cigarette. Buck seemed very sober and thoughtful, though, for that matter, he was at all times a man of few words.

"Well," said I at length, "I thought you fellows would be digging gold in shovelfuls before now. Have you given up the idea, or what?"

Old man Way snorted.

"Jest yuh watch our smoke, young feller," he declared.

"We started, and were hitting it up for the Pinnacles when the old man took sick," Buck explained. "We had to lie up here. He was too sick to travel—too sick even for me to leave him to get medicine or a doctor. He's just got nicely on the mend now. We figured to start on to-morrow."

"Good job I caught you here, then," I commented, "or I would have been all at sea. I've been to your claim already—in the cañon where the mighty Bill Henderson holds forth—darn him!"

"What's all a-doin' thar?" old Way asked eagerly.

"And what did the mighty Bill do to you that you're cussing him?" Buck inquired, with a smile.

So I related my adventure in the cañon, suppressing none of the details. Old man Way swore fluently when I finished. Buck merely grinned. He could appreciate the humor of it in relation to me.

"Darn measly coyote!" the old man growled. "By thunder, if it comes t' shootin', I kin shoot some m'self. The darn skunks!"

"What's his game?" I wondered, voicing a thought which had recurred to me many times since the shooting. "If his claims are rich, why should he be so set on yours? Why should he want to have people kept out of there by one means or another? On the other hand, if he knows there's good stuff on your claim, wouldn't they have been digging into it while you were

gone? It's a month since you were there, but I couldn't see that a fresh shovel mark had been made. Why does he want to hog the whole cañon? What's his game?"

Old man Way shook his head.

"Whatever his game is, we'll spoil it if he doesn't leave us alone," Buck said crisply. "Are you foot-loose, Dave?"

"I sure am," I replied. "I've quit two jobs since I saw you last."

"What's the matter with you going into this thing with us?" he proposed. "I've been talking that over with the old man. I was going to try and reach you with a letter as soon as I'd sized up the ground. Three men can work a thing like that better than two."

"I tell yuh, it's richer'n blazes!" old Way broke in. "Thar's plenty for three of us—plenty. Whateva Buck here says goes with me, young feller, goes just as she lays. If you're a friend uh hisn, you're welcome to anything I got."

He relapsed into silence, puffing furiously at his old, charred pipe.

"There may be trouble, and there may not," Buck summed up. "This Henderson outfit does act as if they might be ugly. But I think it's worth taking a chance. If it comes to a showdown, we'll have all the best of it, because we'll simply be defending ourselves and our own property."

"I'd sure like to make a stake," I mused. "I'm so blamed useless that I'd about given up hope of ever making more than a cow-puncher's wages. And I wouldn't mind being in on the deal—if only to get a whack at the son of a gun who made me run like a scared puppy—confound him!"

"Get in, then," Buck urged. "We'll share alike, much or little. If there's trouble, we can take it as it comes."

"That's the idee," put in old man Way.

"All right; I'm with you," said I, on the impulse of the moment. "Maybe it'll do me good to buck big for a big stake. I've been a yellow dog long enough."

"Amen!" said Buck, in a low tone. "I have, too—and worse. And I'm at

the end of my rope. I need fifty thousand dollars. I've got to have it. And this looks like my last chance—my only chance."

"My last chance, too, I reckon," old Way affirmed. "An' it's hell t' be old as I be an' see your last chance slippin' away, boys. We'll call her that, boys—the old claim. It's a last chance, an' maybe a fightin' chance. Win or lose, Last Chance she is."

We shook hands on the pact, and then sat back, feeling a little foolish, I think, as men are apt to feel over any demonstration of feeling. And for the rest of the afternoon we took it easy, making some leisurely preparation to start the next day. Old man Way was still weak, but he could ride by easy stages, and we were not over forty miles from the claim. My story spurred them to get on the ground. It was a recorded claim, of course, but claims have been jumped before in the heat of gold lust. As the old man said, there was no telling where Bill Henderson might break out.

All this talk of things in which we were vitally interested, since they meant more to each of us than we were altogether willing to admit, drove the Art Homer incident clean out of my mind till we had cooked and eaten our supper at twilight and turned in for the night.

Old man Way slept in the tent. I had unrolled my bed close beside Buck's under the quaking aspens. Thus we could talk unheard, and I then be-thought me of the bug I had promised to put in Buck's ear.

"Say, Buck," I began abruptly, "Art Homer's after you. He's got you figured out as the man who held up that express train."

Buck chuckled in his blankets.

"The deuce you say!" he finally answered. "How did you find out all this?"

"He sized up the gray horse that day at the line camp. I tried to tell you that was what he was doing," I reminded. "Well, day before yesterday I was in Loco, hunting for track of you. You remember, we told him that

day that neither of us had been away from camp for a week. Well, the son of a gun caught me all unaware, and I practically admitted myself a liar on that score. Furthermore, he thinks I know more than I do. He's trying to get something on you, that's sure. As good as offered to split the reward if I'd help him. And whether he was simply leading me on or not, he gave me to understand that he was sure you had jumped the country. He'll make trouble for you about that—unless you can establish an alibi. It's none of my business, but I'd keep my eye peeled if I were you."

"Art Homer may be a pretty wise deputy sheriff," Buck muttered sleepily, "but he won't get anything on me. Go on to sleep, David. It'll soon be daylight."

And that was all the satisfaction I got. I lay awake for two hours, wondering if Buck Norris really did rob that train; went to sleep then, and dreamed about it. Buck was up and cooking breakfast when I opened my sleepy eyes again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONFESSION.

It took us full three days to make Last Chance. The old man was too weak to stand fast travel, for one thing; and in addition we were short of grub, which necessitated a detour by way of the subagency. But eventually we pulled into the cañon, my pack horse and one of the old man's loaded to the limit with flour, beans, bacon, coffee, and such staples.

It was pitch dark when we struck the floor of the cañon. But old man Way knew every crook and gully in it, and he led us with the craft of a plains Indian. A gleam shone from the windows of one cabin of the Henderson camp. No one, however, hailed us or contested our passage, though a dog barked, and the yellow square of an opened door with the figure of a man silhouetted therein showed that one of the crew was watching or listening, or

both. But we kept right on, and presently drew up at Way's wrecked cabin. A great cottonwood spread its leafy arms close by, and under this we made camp. Buck and the old man staked two of the horses, and turned the others loose up the cañon. There was no outlet above, and they could not pass us unheard. Meanwhile, I started a fire and set to cooking.

We were all tired. The fire sank to a bed of glowing coals while we smoked on full stomachs. Old man Way fell asleep curled against a roll of blankets, the gleam of the fire shedding a crimson tint on his hoary beard and hair. Beyond the radius of the coals the black night, doubly black in that deep cleft in the hills, hung like a velvet shroud. And the only sounds that broke the sepulchral stillness was the heavy breathing of the old man, the subdued, watery croon of the little creek, and now and then the faint rustle of a wood rat upon his nightly adventuring in the brush.

But presently a wind stirred the interlacing boughs of the cottonwood. It fanned the dying fire to a redder glow, and wafted a bank of cloud across the sky, so that the little stars came twinkling out. Then the moon sailed into view, riding high and silvery, and away above the ghostly murk of the cañon the mountain slopes took luminous form.

"They're sitting on the big porch at home," Buck broke the long silence, "looking up at that same old moon. Looking at it through the branches of a tree, just as we are. Only the tree's a magnolia. Why, I can almost smell the sweet, heavy odor of those waxy blossoms."

I said nothing.

"So you met the colonel and Dot?" he continued. "What a little place this world is, to be sure! And the colonel talked to you proudly of his successful son, who had come West and made a man of himself after being a rotten failure at home—and you played up to it like a gentleman when you knew all the time what a rotten fake I was. Don't I look like pretty small potatoes to you, Dave?"

"Well," said I, "when I review my own history, and the cussedness I've been guilty of, with everything in my favor, I don't consider myself qualified to pass judgment on any man."

"I'll tell you some time the miserable, indescribable folly of it all," he said. "I can't just now—except that I want fifty thousand dollars—want it so badly that I begin to understand why men steal and embezzle and falsify accounts to get money. I never needed money so much in my life, and I have wasted a birthright in ways that make me ashamed to think of them. The pity of it is that other people will suffer for my sins—suffer downright want, perhaps, and the added bitterness of being deceived, of leaning on a broken crutch. Dave, there isn't any epithet in the language harsh enough for me. I've been a fool of the first water."

"There's another present, thank you," I grunted. "You're not the first, and I dare say you won't be the last. I squandered a goodly heritage before I learned what an honest day's work was. Lots of men have done that. Only you and I seem to be of a type that, once down, stays down, and isn't worth a cent to itself or any one else. I've vowed a dozen times that I'd dig in and make another stake. But I never do. Whenever the going gets hard I'm off on a big bust—or something. I have a B. A. from the best university in America—and I'm not even a first-class, forty-dollar cow-puncher. What good is a man like that?"

"But you haven't involved other people," he muttered. "Nobody else has to pay in sorrow and mortification on your account. If they do, I pity you."

"Well, no," I admitted. "I'm the only one who gets hurt, and I suppose I'm only getting what's due me. Though that's poor consolation when I think of what I might have been and done with the chance I had."

"You're lucky," he said. "I did have everyting my father thinks I have now—and I threw it to the birds."

"It seems strange," he began again, "that a man of decent breeding, with all sorts of family traditions behind

him, and the best of influences and surroundings to boot, can go to the devil so completely. For the last five or six years I haven't seemed to care much where I went or what I did, so long as I could eat and get a skinful of whisky about every so often. Lord, I don't know how I could go home and meet everybody again. As a matter of fact, there won't be any home to go to unless—well, we'll see. But I got a jolt or month or so ago, I can tell you. I believe I've done more tall thinking since then than I ever did in my life.

"I must be a throwback, a reversion to some regular old wolf of an ancestor," he pursued reminiscently. "So far back as the family history runs, the Norrises have been born with silver spoons in their mouths. The old, original founder of the family in America got a grant of fifty thousand acres in Maryland long before the thirteen colonies revolted. God knows how many generations of us have been born in the great, square, stone house he built. It's a huge place; you could turn a coach and four in the main hall. There's a great, winding stair goes up from that, and a suit of old English Hugh de Norris' armor is mounted on a pedestal at the foot. He stands there with both mailed hands clasped over the hilt of a long sword. I remember when I was a little chap the old mammy used to frighten me into being good by telling me how the old armor walked in the hall whenever I was naughty. I often imagined I could hear the clank of steel.

"And all around on the wall were portraits of dead and gone Norrises—all good, clean-living gentlemen who tended their estate and hunted foxes and served their country and brought up sons and daughters to follow in their steps. I'm the first, to my own knowledge, that ever ran amuck. And it seems all the stranger when I think of my father. There have been soldiers and sailors in the family—men who led active lives. But he was—is, I should say—a quiet man who loves books and flowers—a scholarly dreamer. And look at me! I have raised Cain from Texas to Montana, and gloried in it!

"It's a beautiful place—that old home of mine—Dave, and life there as I recollect it is pretty near ideal. Of course the original fifty thousand acres has dwindled sadly. The war trimmed it down to about fifteen hundred. But the house is there, and the big, shady grounds. I used to take it all as a matter of course. Now, looking back, I come near being homesick sometimes. Still, it never occurred to me to think of it as passing into the hands of a stranger, of other people's children romping around under those trees and calling the place home. Or of me, in my plumb foolishness, being directly responsible for it. And—Oh, what's the use talking! Let's go to bed."

CHAPTER IX.

PAY DIRT.

A week elapsed before our contentious neighbors took notice of us in any manner whatsoever. We went about our business as if we had the cañon to ourselves, as, indeed, we had, for all we saw of Bill Henderson and his gang. They were days of promise, too, albeit of downright hard labor. We wasted no time upon our personal comfort. We had a tent and grub, and that was sufficient. As old man Way said, it was time enough to fix for winter when winter came.

So upon the next morning we breakfasted, and straightway, with pick and shovel, attacked the bank under which the gold was supposed to lie. It was impossible to penetrate far without a cave-down. But we worked all that day clearing out the hole which he had started. The old fellow was rapidly regaining his strength. He took his ax, and while we dug he slashed down a number of lodge-pole pine at a point where they could be trimmed and dropped over the bank about where we needed them. Thus we had material to timber up the hole as we drove it.

I doubt if two men ever worked harder than Buck Norris and I did. The gold hunger spurred us from morning till night. The old man

chopped timbers, supervised their setting in place. Also, he prepared the meals. But ten and twelve hours a day Buck and I dug and sweated in that hole till the blisters on our hands became callouses, and our overstrained muscles ached even while we slept. I don't know how many tons of dirt we moved in the first few days, but we drove a low entry forty feet into the bank, clearing the silt and clay down to a gravelly bed as the old man directed. I wanted to try some of the gravel with a pan, but Buck steadfastly refused to take the time.

"Wait till we get in far enough to show good stuff if it's here," he said.

The old man seemed indifferent. "I know it's thar," he would say. "Ain't I got the stuff to show? You'll see."

But at last Buck stopped to roll a cigarette one afternoon while the old man and myself set in a roof timber at the face of the tunnel; and before he took the second puff he said:

"Hang it! Let's see if all this hard work amounts to anything, anyway."

Old Way grinned.

"I thought you'd be a-wantin' t' see colors pretty soon," he remarked, and went for his pan.

He dug a little gravel here and there at random from the floor of our entry. We had a homemade barrow contrived to wheel out dirt, and this he bade us fill with gravel also, and wheel to the creek, which rippled by a few yards from the bank. Then he squatted on his haunches at the stream, and, dipping the pan full of water, jiggled it with a peculiar rocking motion, allowing the water and coarser particles to escape over the tilted edge.

We leaned over him, agog with breathless interest, like children who watch the opening of a Christmas parcel. Little by little, the muddy water and coarse sand poured off. He dipped the pan full again, oscillated it rapidly, repeated this process a third and fourth time, until at last only a scant handful of the original contents remained. Then he stopped and poked this about with his forefinger. It was specked with dull bits of metal.

"Look at that!"

Buck reached down and picked out a nugget the size of a small filbert.

"Heavens an' earth!" the old man murmured. "If she runs like that t' every pan, we'll all be millionaires. Wait a minute, you fellers!"

For we were both, in our eagerness, poking and pawing for the fine bits of gold in the pan.

He took a little more water, and washed very carefully. Then with his knife blade he picked out the particles of metal and laid them on an outspread bandanna. There was a good tablespoonful of nuggets, varying all sizes from flat, thin specks the diameter of a pinhead to the largest, which Buck had first seen. And there was still, he told us, considerable fine gold in the residue of sand which remained. For that matter, we could see it—the tiniest of "colors."

"Ain't it thar, huh?" the old man chuckled triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you, boys? We'll all be wearin' diamonds yit if we stay with Last Chance."

"How much is there—about?" Buck asked soberly.

"That pan? Oh, mebbe thirty, forty dollars," Way answered. "It's shore rich stuff, that gravel, boys. Richer'n blazes. But I've seen it run bigger'n that. Back in sixty-eight——"

He grew reminiscent, rolling a piece of gold back and forth in the palm of his hand. He had staked claims innumerable, from California to Alaska. A few times in his long life of prospecting he had struck it rich, wrested treasure from the lap of the earth, and thrown it right and left while it lasted, because, as he said, there was always more where that came from. To him there was more satisfaction in having his judgment confirmed than in anything else, I think. The mere panning out of rich dirt was only the fulfilling of his expectations. But with Buck and me it was altogether different. It partook of the nature of a miracle, an unbelievable streak of fortune. Still, there was the gold.

"If one pan washes out that much, what will the barrowful run?" Buck wondered. "And there's hundreds of barrowloads in that hole we've made. Great Jehoshaphat! Somebody pinch me."

"We've struck it, that's all. I knowed it was thar," old Way croaked. "Struck it good an' plenty. If the dirt holds good, you'll soon have that fifty thousand yuh been talkin' about—an' then some."

"But suppose it's just a pocket? I've heard of such things," Buck said uneasily. "Let's try this stuff in the barrow. There's another pan at camp. Show me how you do it, Way."

I ran and got the other pan, and our tin washbasin for myself. Behold us, then, shortly, to our ankles in the stream, jiggling and spilling, and stopping between times to peer at the residue, seeking anxiously the dull glint which meant so much. To be sure, we were rather keen on this gold hunt. Speaking for myself, I was plainly excited. It seemed altogether unreal that a man could dig in common earth, and find native gold in such quantity. But there was the stuff, to be felt with the fingers and viewed with the naked eye. Likely enough we wasted much in our amateur industry, but the net result of two hours' concerted washing was a pile of "dust" on Way's bandanna that the old man estimated to be worth three hundred dollars.

"That's a day's work," said Buck, when we tipped the last pan from the barrow. "Let's knock off. It's getting close to six, anyway."

"Mebbe you'll be satisfied with a reasonable day's work after this," the old man grinned. "I never see two fellers so blame full of ambition t' shovel dirt. I kin work some m'self, but I never seen the beat uh you two. But yuh kain't keep up that lick. No sense in it nolow."

We had overdone the thing, without doubt; it was beginning to tell on us—the uncertainty, perhaps, as much as the actual labor.

"What's the matter," Buck spoke

after supper, "with getting a couple of men and setting them to work here?"

"The idee's all right," Way answered. "But I dunno's we orter rush the thing. First off, we got t' make sure there's dirt enough t' justify. Sabe? I bin thinkin'. It's this way: Mebbe they's a mighty wide bed uh that gravel. An' again mebbe it's just bull luck that we happen to tunnel in right along the bed uh the old creek, and it's just a narrow strip. That thar pay dirt is shore rich, but she's almighty thin. She only lays about ten or twelve inches on bed rock fur's the tunnel runs. If they's a wide bed of it spread t' hell 'n' gone under the bank, we kin work some men 'n' git rich quick. Contrary, if she lays only in the old channel, an' that's narrow, we kin work it all out ourselves in a summer easy. I'd say run that tunnel in a hundred feet, then drift crossways. If the gravel pans big as fur's we go in each direction, it's a cinch we got lots uh dirt t' work. We kin hire men, run a sluice from the creek, 'n' wash ten thousand a week. I'd say wait till we see what we got."

This sounded like wisdom. We were both, by hearsay, familiar enough with the history of placer mining to know that sometimes the richest dirt ran in streaks—small streaks, at that. And if we had but blundered along the main channel where the gold had been deposited by the wash of countless ages before the creek changed its course, we might soon find ourselves a few thousand the richer, but with no more gravel to work. I think the old man's summing up rather disheartened Buck. At least he was very sober and thoughtful the rest of the evening. He sat staring into the fire long after the old man went to bed.

"What's worrying you?" I asked at length.

"Fifty thousand dollars," he replied shortly. "It's that or nothing with me. If this peters out, I see my finish."

He rose abruptly, and made ready for bed, and neither of us pursued the subject further.

The next day we started in systematically cleaning up the floor of the tun-

nel with a twofold object in view—to see if the gravel held uniformly rich, and, if so, to accumulate a fund where-with to enlarge operations should the extension of the tunnel and the subsequent cross drift justify work on a larger scale. For in that case we would need men and lumber, and men and lumber cost money.

Old Way cobbled up his rocker, which Bill Henderson, or some member of Henderson's crew, had partly destroyed, and got it in working shape. This proved vastly quicker than the pan method. And, channel or no channel, we had certainly struck dirt that was heavy laden with gold. True, the gravel lay thinly on bed rock, as the old man had pointed out, but from the amount of metal it carried a man needed no great head for figures to calculate that a limited area of it would make the three of us rich. Suffice it to say that in two days, by dint of strenuous labor, we cleaned up the floor of the tunnel, and incidentally cleaned up three thousand dollars' worth of coarse and fine gold as a net result.

Whereupon Buck took heart again, became optimistic, and went whistling at his work. We settled that we should drive our tunnel a hundred feet farther—no great undertaking in that deposit of gravel and silt—cross drift fifty feet each way, and if the gravel held uniformly good we would send to Helena for miners, and, as the old man put it, "just everlastin'ly rip the insides outa that thar bank."

So Buck and I went light-heartedly to digging and shoveling, taking turns at wheeling the waste forth in our clumsy barrow.

We were hard at this upon the second day after the big clean-up when Buck suddenly paused in a listening attitude.

"Evidently we have a visitor," said he.

I listened to the voice for a minute.

"Yes," I grunted, "and it sounds to me like Bill Henderson."

"In that case," said Buck, laying aside his shovel, "I'll just step out and inquire into the gentleman's business."

CHAPTER X.

BILL HENDERSON'S PROPOSITION.

I was treading on Buck's heels when he stepped from the gloom of the tunnel into the hot sunlight. My ears had placed the big, booming voice correctly. Bill Henderson was doing us the honor of a call, sure enough. But he was not receiving what one might term a cordial reception. In fact, old Way's attitude was the pink of hostility. And Bill was not taking either the language or the demonstration in good part. He replied with his arms as well as his tongue, gesticulating like an excited Frenchman. They were not more than thirty yards from us. Viewed impersonally, it would have been comical to watch. But neither Buck nor I could quite take a disinterested view, although Buck did pass a dry remark to the effect that if their hands were tied neither of them would be able to say a word.

Their hands kept time to their tongues, however. So far as the argument went, old Way appeared to have the best of it. His old voice rose in shrill profanity. He was cursing Bill Henderson by sections. So busy were they that they neither saw nor heard us until Buck spoke.

"Well," said he, "what seems to be the trouble?"

"Why, there ain't no trouble to speak of," Henderson started, and lowered his voice. "The old man's got a wrong idea, that's all."

"That's all, huh?" old Way yelled. "I'll show if that's all! I'll show yuh whether I got the wrong idee or not! I'll——"

I should hate to set down the things he said and continued to say; and the very act of saying them seemed to transport him into a murderous fury. Of course he had suffered a good deal from Bill Henderson, and I suppose it was cumulative. At any rate, he suddenly threw up his shovel and ran at the big man, with a perfectly diabolical expression twisting his seamed old face.

I doubt if Henderson could have evaded the blow, and I am equally sure that Way would have clefthim to the

chin with the shovel blade if Buck and myself had not grabbed him.

"Let up now, dad," said Buck, bracing himself against the old man's struggle. "Let us do the fighting if there's to be any. Cool off."

"Blast him! Ain't he beat me up twict, 'n' abused me, 'n' raised thunder all round?" Way raved. "Lemme go! I'll stomp his red muzzle into the creek, I will!"

Henderson stood his ground while we talked the old man out of his frenzy. When his vituperation ceased we released our hold. He picked up his hat, pulled it down over his eyes, and turned his back on the three of us. But he halted at a dozen steps to call back over his shoulder:

"You keep away from me, Bill Henderson, or I'll shore bust yuh wide open—plumb wide open! I'm onto yuh like a wolf."

"That's pretty good advice—to you," Buck supplemented. "Leave the old man alone."

"And don't get it into your head that a man runs *every* time one of your drunken bushwhackers throws lead in his direction," I blurted out angrily, for the memory of my hurried departure rose up fresh at sight of his beefy face.

"Shut up," Buck grinned. "Let me do the talking."

Henderson was a cool customer, at that. He did not even change countenance, but made a deprecating gesture. And when he spoke his tone was of friendly conciliation.

"You boys got this sized up wrong," he said earnestly. "The old man's cranky, and he's just naturally got it in for me. I tried to do him a good turn, too, but he don't think so."

"I suppose you consider it doing a man a good turn to hammer his face out of shape?" Buck sneered. "An old man at that. You're a bird, all right. Have you any more good turns up your sleeve?"

"Why, darn it, all I did was offer to buy his darned claim, and he gets the idea I'm tryin' to gouge him out of it," Henderson defended stoutly, ig-

noring the palpable unfriendliness in Buck's attitude. "Come at me like he did just now. Gosh all fishhooks! I didn't want to hurt him, but I had to keep him from hurtin' *me*. That's all there was to his gettin' beat up. And I offered him five hundred for his claim. Heap more'n it's worth."

"Why did you want to throw good money away, then?" Buck asked. "You don't look to me like a charitable institution."

"Look here," Henderson said, with the first sign of irritation, "I don't much like the way you talk. Yuh act like you had it in for me, too. What's the idea?"

"Just this," Buck promptly replied: "You know where you and Way stand on this claim proposition, don't you? Well, we're partners in this deal now. It may be worth money, and it may not. But we're going to work it. Peaceably if we can; but we're going to work it. And if there's any more smashed rockers, or boulders rolled down on our camp, or target practice, you know—why—"

He shrugged his shoulders, and took out his cigarette material, as if that were the end of it.

"Well?" Henderson prompted.

"Why, seeing you're the only neighbor we've got, we'd naturally think you knew something about it," Buck answered carelessly.

"On the square, fellers"—Henderson adopted the confidential attitude—"this here claim ain't worth tobacco money. Fact. You'll see. I got most uh the blame cañon, and I aim to unload it on somebody else pretty soon."

"Then why are you so keen on the old man's ground?" Buck demanded.

"Aw, shucks! They ain't no use explainin' to *you*," Henderson rasped out; and, swinging about, walked off down the cañon.

Buck looked after him thoughtfully.

"Our friend Bill has some sort of card up his sleeve," he remarked. "And he's a cool hand. I shouldn't be surprised if things began to happen."

Things began to happen sooner perhaps than Buck anticipated. And the

first of the happenings was another visit from Bill Henderson.

He walked into camp that same evening just as we had finished eating. Old man Way had a good meal tucked under his belt, Buck had just got through pointing out the foolishness of starting a row with Henderson unless he made some crooked move, and so Way curbed his smoldering anger, greeting the big man with a gruff:

"Whatcha want?"

"I got a business proposition to make," said Henderson.

"Business—huh!" Way snorted. "You ain't no business man. You're a crook."

"Go easy," Henderson growled. "I ain't used to that sort of talk. Can yuh listen a minute without gettin' your back up? If you can't, I might as well go home."

Buck nudged the old man, and he subsided, muttering into his beard.

"Go ahead," he told Henderson. "We're listening."

"I'm layin' my hand on the table," Henderson began. "I got quite a chunk uh money sunk in this cañon, like a plumb fool. I got just enough of a showin' so I might get some outside party interested enough to either buy the works or put in money enough to start things goin' right. But here's this strip uh ground san'wiched in the middle uh my string. Got to run my sluice across it. Got to traipse back an' forth over it. And it don't show much—it's the poorest claim in the gulch. If I bring a man to size up the ground it don't look good. A man wants a clean sweep. It might interfere with workin' on a big scale, an' this here ground ain't no pan or rocker proposition. There's pay dirt here, of course, but it's goin' to take money to make it a payin' proposition. Now, if I had the whole thing to myself, maybe I could get my money out, or maybe make somethin'. You fellers can't do much—not more'n common wages, nohow. I'll leave it to you if it ain't so. Now, I'll give yuh six hundred cash for the claim, and give yuh all three steady work at two bones a day an' grub—

even if me an' the old man did have a little trouble. I'm willin' to pass that up. Six hundred cash. What yuh say?"

The old man's faded blue eyes began to glitter, and his mouth opened. But Buck dug him with his elbow again, and he merely grunted.

"What yuh say?" Henderson repeated.

He took a fat roll of bills from his pocket, and ostentatiously began to peel off twenties.

"You might as well put back your money," Buck said flatly. "We're not selling. We're going to work this ground. If it's no good, we'll give it to you when we quit."

"Gosh all fishhooks!" Henderson grumbled. "Have some sense. Yuh can't pan as much as I'm offerin' you in wages."

"We'll take a chance," Buck answered briefly. "And this one claim isn't going to queer your deal—if you have anything worth selling."

Henderson pocketed his money. He eyed us calculatingly for a few seconds.

"No use chewin' the rag about it, I guess," he remarked. "So long."

He sauntered off. At fifty yards' distance he turned and sauntered back.

"Say," he said, "I'll make it an even thousand. A thousand dollars in real money."

Old man Way could restrain himself no longer. He raised up on his haunches, and the long, grizzled beard of him stuck out at a belligerent angle.

"Git t' thunder outa here!" he yelled at the top of his voice.

"Oh, all right, old feller, all right," Henderson returned coolly. "Keep your hair flat. I'm gone."

And this time he really did go.

"Now, I wonder?" Buck reflected, staring after him.

But there was no use wondering, and old Way raved and cursed Bill Henderson with such fluency and bitterness that we dropped the subject at once.

Next morning Henderson and four men tramped up the cañon, passing on the far side just as we went to work in the tunnel. They carried axes, shov-

els, and a long crosscut saw. All forenoon we could hear faint echoes of their activity. When Way called us to the noon meal we found him stroking his beard in thoughtful silence.

"I went an' took a look t' see what them fellers is doin'," he said, after a while. "Two of 'em workin' on the creek, puttin' in a little dam. The other three's whipsawin' lumber."

"Let 'em go to it—dam and whipsaw all they like," said I. "We're getting the money."

"I'm jest a-wonderin' where that red-muzzled jasper'll break out next," the old man remarked. "'N' I'd shore like to git onto his combination."

"Do you suppose he has struck good stuff, and wants to get hold of this before we make a strike? It would be his style to try and hog everything in sight," Buck put in. "Hanged if I can make him out—except that he's a nervy cuss, and long-headed."

"Say"—the old man looked up from his plate suddenly—"I'm a-goin' to pan some uh Bill Henderson's gravel below here while him 'n' his bunch is up the creek."

Nor could we dissuade him from this plan. He was a determined old devil when he set out to do a thing. He was bound to satisfy himself as to what Henderson's claims amounted to. So, to keep him from harm, Buck elected to go along, while I kept watch to warn them if Henderson or any of his men came down. It looked like sheer foolishness, and a waste of time, but there was no stopping Way.

The two of them disappeared. I sat in the shade of a tree, rather appreciating the relief from hard labor, and thus spent a drowsy afternoon. The pair of them got back a few minutes before the Henderson crowd came downstream. They had found nothing but colors.

Next morning as soon as the coast was clear the old man was off again, panning the lower claims to see what he could see. Buck lost patience, and we fell to our work in the tunnel. Way did not even come home to cook dinner.

The three succeeding days he spent in this surreptitious investigation, while we dug and wheeled and set timbers, and grumbled largely because he neglected the cooking. By that time Henderson's outfit was pretty well down to the edge of our claim, and Way could not escape their notice.

"So fur as I kin see," he summed up the result of his prospecting, "Bill Henderson's dead right about his claims. I panned right 'n' left, 'n' they's no place a man could wash more'n three, four dollars a day if he worked right hard. 'N' say, what yuh reckon he's dammin' the creek and buildin' up that sluice box for?"

This was the purpose of the whip-sawed lumber. Henderson's men were adding the new-made boards to the old sluice, flaring them to make a big, V-shaped trough down across our ground.

"That's big enough to carry the whole creek," Buck observed.

"By gum!" Old Way looked at us. "That's what he aims t' do—I'll bet on it. Hog the water. We kain't work without water."

"Yes, we can—until we start to wash, anyway," I pointed out. "We can get plenty for cooking from the spring."

"Let them work their heads off," said Buck. "If we have to, we'll give him a dose of his own medicine. Half a keg of powder at the dam and sluice head will settle the water question."

"Now you're talkin'!" Way interjected, with a cheerful grin. "We'll let 'em be. But I'm shore goin' to pan up creek when they git past. I panned her once all the way from the head before I staked this. But I'll go over her again, just for luck."

Which he did within a few days. And the net result was puzzling, inasmuch as it shed no light on Bill Henderson's great industry, nor his desire to buy us out. There was no sign anywhere, Way was positive, that they had struck anything but ordinary pay dirt—noting approaching what we had. Therefore it was reasonable to suppose that he believed our claim to be like the rest, an ordinary placer proposition. Then why was he so anxious to get hold of

it? We took no stock in his tale that he merely wanted to complete the string of claims for the showing it would make to a buyer. Our bit of ground would not interfere if he had the goods.

"If he'd any idee that there was rich dirt here, he'd 'a' jumped this claim as soon as I hit out for War Post after he beat me up that time," Way ruminated. "Yuh bet he would. 'N' he'd 'a' held her with a Remington, too, if he'd ever got his fingers on some uh these nuggets. No, siree, he don't know there's rich gravel under this bank. If he don't know, what's his twist to git this claim? What's he up to that he's plumb anxious t' have the cañon to hisself?"

That question was nagging perpetually at Buck and myself, too.

And we wondered still more when Henderson took advantage of the old man's absence from camp one day to stroll up and unblushingly offer us the "thousand dollars in real money" if we would quit the claim.

"What about old Way?" Buck asked, drawing him on.

Henderson shrugged his wide shoulders.

"You fellers split the thousand, and ride off, and I'll manage old man Way," he said significantly.

Then Buck lifted his voice, and called him a name that stands for a declaration of war in the cow country. Henderson's lips drew back from his teeth, and he made a rush at Buck, wonderfully quick for so heavy-bodied a man. And right then and there the two of them would have fought it out had I not interjected a rock into the quarrel. A chunk the size of an apple it was, and I threw it hard. Instead of taking him alongside the head, as I intended, it bounced off his shoulder. He backed away, staggering and wincing from the hurt—while Buck roasted me to a nice brown for interfering in so summary a manner.

"I'll give you two your bellyful yet," Henderson yelled back, when he had gained a safe distance.

But this, while indicating the state of his feeling toward us, shed no light

on his persistent effort to get hold of the claim.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEXT MOVE OF HENDERSON.

For a time we went about our affairs undisturbed. Henderson and his men passed up and down the creek, sometimes working on the new sluice, again busy with shovel and pan. But none of them interfered with us in any manner. We began to think that Bill Henderson had given us up for a bad job.

So the tunnel grew apace, thrusting far into the soft bank. A great pile grew out from the mouth, where we dumped the waste. The prospects grew better as we drove in. If anything, the gravel bed thickened. We could not resist now and then sampling the dirt next to bed rock. And it panned uniformly good. The days became burdened with monotony. So many feet to push the tunnel, so many barrowfuls to wheel, squeaking, to the dump, so many timbers to set in place; eat, sleep, and work. We surely did work.

Then one night I lifted my head from the blankets at a sound of trampling hoofs. Our horses ranged up the cañon. There was grass enough, and they seldom came down. But to make sure of not waking up some morning and finding ourselves afoot, we had thrown a brush fence across the lower line of the claim, where the cañon narrowed. I knew the horses could not get out that way. But I listened. They were traveling slowly; nevertheless, they were moving in a fashion different from loose stock that wanders at its own pleasure. A man does not work several seasons on round-up without acquiring a subtle sense of such things. Still, something might have frightened them—some animal. There were bear and mountain lion in the Pinnacles.

"Anyhow, they can't get out," I said to myself, and turned over.

But the clink of hoofs on rock continued to sound. I was sleepy, too; nevertheless, I found myself lifting my

head again, straining my ears to listen. Old Way's loud snoring irritated me. And Buck was fast asleep, his arms flung above his head. The sounds grew fainter.

"They've about hit the brush," I thought. "I'll hear them poking back in a minute."

The minutes slipped by, and there was no returning trample. Instead, the sounds gradually died out altogether, and left me sitting up, staring into the blank, hushed night. Now I knew the horses had not stopped. Hence—the logical deduction stirred me to haste. I drew on my overalls and boots, caught up my belt and gun, and ran, bare-headed, down the cañon. In the deep shade, I blundered headlong into the brush barrier. This I followed, and in another minute came to what I fully expected to find—a gap, which had not existed prior to dusk.

I wasted no time in speculation, but struck a dogtrot down through the cañon. Presently I came abreast of the Henderson cabins—squat, unlighted blurs in the night. No sound so far. I passed, quickening my pace, breathing heavily with the exertion. Beyond the camp I stopped to listen, and heard the horses. I ran then, for I knew they were being driven, and that I must head them before the cañon widened, for then the driver would crowd on steam to give them a good start for the plains.

And before long I drew up close enough to make out the dim forms of the moving beasts, with a mounted man pacing sedately at their heels. He did not hear me. The horses made just enough noise to drown the patter of my feet. Hugging close under the bank, where deep shadows concealed me, I overhauled, and then got past, them. Once in front of the bunch, with the cañon walls rising sheer on either side, I threw up my Colt, and let drive over the head of the gentleman in the rear. The six horses whirled at the red flash in their faces, and pounded back on their tracks. I fired again to speed their going, the shots crashing in that narrow space like a fieldpiece.

In the mad clatter of their retreat, I could not tell if the midnight purloiner of saddle stock were in the van of the flight or no. Nor did I care much. I was hot with the run, and otherwise keyed up with defeating his project. Also, I was armed. If he cared to stay and try conclusions with me, I was ready.

So I followed at a fair pace, guided by the thud of hoofs and the bright sparks that flashed where steel clinked sharply against stone on the rock-strewn floor. On up past the Henderson camp they raced; and it I passed without raising a light or a hail. That very quietude was in itself an admission of cognizance. I guessed that whosoever had attempted to run off our horses was by then under cover, watching or listening. Wherefore, once I was a little distance by, I lifted up my voice, and proclaimed my opinion of would-be horse thieves. This brought no response. The horses were far ahead, so I followed, coming presently to the gap in the fence, and heard then my name called from camp.

"Hello!" I yelled.

"What the devil was up?"

It was Buck's voice, and I could hear him coming. He located me easily enough. Old Way was right behind him, lugger a long-barreled buffalo gun.

I explained briefly.

"Had their nerve," Buck commented. "I woke up, and found you gone. Right after that I heard two shots. Then I heard somebody yelling down the cañon, and here came the horses on the run. Say, what's the object of *this* move?"

This, of course, was unanswerable at that stage of the game. We contented ourselves with replacing the brush which had been dragged aside. Then we went back to bed.

We rose with the sun. The mouth of the tunnel was in plain sight of camp. Old man Way first noticed something wrong.

"Gosh A'mighty!" he muttered, pointing a bent forefinger. "Look!"

Where the square tunnel mouth had

gaped was now a great, irregular hole. We left our half-prepared breakfast, and hurried to the spot.

"A cave-in," I grumbled.

"Cave nothin'!" Way snarled.

We got over the heap that blocked the tunnel, and edged carefully into the entry. It was not, on close inspection, as bad as it looked, nor half as bad as it might easily have been. The timbers had given way—we supposed—and several tons of silt, sand, and gravel had caved down. But just past the slip we found something that started us thinking—a crowbar which was not ours, and which had certainly not been there when we knocked off work. Therefore—

Old man Way cursed the Henderson outfit with tearful rage in his voice, and I seconded him to the best of my ability. Buck, however, remained cool.

"This grows interesting," he observed at length. "We must be getting on Bill Henderson's nerves. I wonder if he thinks this sort of thing will scare us off? Well, I see there is one thing to do. We have to watch this tunnel. They're bunglers, but they'll do a better job—if they get at it again."

"They'll be bushwhacking us next," I prophesied.

We cleared out the dirt with many a malediction on the vandals who had caused the extra work. The timbering showed plainly the marks where it had been loosened. But it might have been worse—a lot worse. If they had laid fuse to a keg of powder, say.

"They botched the job," said Buck. "We've lost two days. But we're onto them. They won't get another chance."

At least it did not seem as if they could—unless they took to out-and-out assassination. We were in the heart of a wild and desolate region, far afield in a country where the arm of the law was at best sluggish in its movement. We could blink out in a red haze, and months might elapse before a man might think to inquire our whereabouts. But such a contingency seemed far-fetched. There were three of us, and we were neither children nor fools where self-protection was concerned.

I thought old Way rather welcomed the idea of a downright scrap. He was a great believer in the potency of gunpowder. And Bill Henderson's name was sufficient to make him bristle with rage.

After this occurrence we moved our camp up to the tunnel, spreading our beds at night in the gaping mouth of it. If any one desired to meddle with our workings, he had to walk over us first. Also, we took no more chances on being clean afoot. Each night at sundown we caught a horse and tied him to a tree at camp, turning him loose at dawn after seeing that the rest were still there. With these precautions we felt that we had the Henderson crowd properly checkmated.

"Son," said old Way one morning, "bacon's gittin' low; 'n', anyway, a change 'u'd go mighty good. What's the matter with you gittin' a deer?"

I jumped at the suggestion, glad of a change from sweating in the tunnel. So I shouldered a rifle and took to the hills at daylight. My wanderings led me up on a ridge, a most ungodly distance from home; but at length I downed a fat buck sunning his velvety horns in a little open glade. With the hams and loins on my back I bore homeward. In that wild tangle of peaks and gorges I failed to make a bee line for the claim. Instead, I came out on the brink of the cañon, fairly above the Henderson camp.

Laying down the meat, I stopped to rest—and to gaze curiously on the buildings below. If Bill Henderson and his gang ever declared open war on us, I thought, they were in a bad place to stand a siege. I was five hundred feet above them, but I could have flipped a pebble onto the cabin roofs. I was well screened by brush, so I surveyed the cañon leisurely. Two or three men were moving about. Henderson himself presently came out and sat on a log in the yard. And while I was looking a horseman dropped down the narrow, winding trail that led from the top of the divide.

I thought he bore a familiar air, but until he dismounted I could not place

him. Then something—a gesture, or the way he walked—revealed his identity as Art Homer.

"Well!" I grunted. "I wonder what he's doing here?"

Naturally I jumped to a conclusion; in view of my last conversation with this deputy person, I guessed that he was apt to be after Buck Norris. The affair of the express car had lain in abeyance. Buck never mentioned it, nor did I. When I came to think of it, he had never denied nor affirmed. Nevertheless, the deadly finger of circumstantial evidence pointed at my partner. To my mind, therefore, Homer's presence in the cañon was fraught with disagreeable significance.

I tarried only long enough to see him shake hands with Henderson, stable his horse, and enter the cabin. Then I shouldered my venison, and hurried to camp.

It seemed to be visitors' day in the cañon. Buck and old Way sat on our rolled-up beds by the tunnel, listening to a short, fat man. He was garbed as if he had stepped straight from a haberdasher's shop—straight-brimmed straw hat, white collar, new-pressed trousers. Even his shoes showed glossy through the slight dust he had accumulated in a few minutes' walking. And he talked ponderously of mines and mining. I hung my meat on a tree, and sat down. I was not at all interested in this well-fed, portly individual. I wanted to tell Buck that Art Homer was apt to come riding up the creek any minute, and that if he had anything on his mind he had better lie low. But Buck and the old man were listening gravely, and I hated to break in. Sometimes a regard for form remains with us when we have long quitted the circle where forms pass current. At any rate, I made a cigarette, and fell to listening. I was within twenty feet, so I could not help hearing.

"——hydraulic proposition, pure and simple, as I explained," was the tail end of the first sentence I caught. "Being miners, you can readily understand that we will require a large area of this gold-bearing alluvial deposit to operate

on. Your claim lying in the middle would be a constant source of dispute. You can't expect to make anything out of it working by hand. You haven't got either the ground or the water to put in a monitor. Therefore you expect to sell sooner or later. I'm making you a good offer at fifteen hundred. That's more than you'll make in two years, working it single-handed. It isn't so much the value of the ground as the fact that, owing to its position, we need it in our business."

"But," said Buck, "suppose I tell you that we've struck good dirt, and don't want to sell for the simple reason that we can make the ground produce?"

"My dear sirs"—the fat person thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and bestowed a tolerant smile on his listeners—"with all respect to you, I'd have to doubt that. Henderson has had this cañon prospected thoroughly. It's stuff that'll pay with up-to-date hydraulic methods, and in no other way. The whole thing for a mile and a half doesn't go five dollars to the yard. It's uniform, but it is no ground for individual placer working. If there were any rich dirt in this cañon we'd have it located. I'd have to be skeptical if you told me you'd struck a bonanza—very skeptical."

"We've got good enough prospects to hang on," Buck answered shortly. "We won't sell. That's straight."

"Yuh betcha that's straight," Way echoed.

"I'll make it two thousand," the fat one offered, and wiped his glistening brow with a voluminous handkerchief.

"Not if you made it thirty," said Buck.

"Well, think it over, gentlemen, think it over," the would-be purchaser said. "I'll keep the offer open. Two thousand, remember. That's more than it's worth to you. Here's my card."

"If we had real, high-grade dirt to show you," Buck drawled, "what would you bid for the claim?"

"Wouldn't buy," the other returned promptly. "I wouldn't need to. If you had big pay dirt here there would be more along the cañon. And the claims

we have would be worth a million. But you haven't got it. I'll give you two thousand if you take it up within a week. Good morning."

He walked off—rather, he waddled. As soon as he was out of earshot I beckoned Buck aside, and told him about Homer. He grinned at first, but presently grew serious.

"Hang it!" he said. "Surely the blamed idiot won't go that far? Arrest me, I mean. He's got no proof."

"He's got a strong hunch," I pointed out; "and the capture—any capture that leads to conviction—is worth three thousand dollars to him. That's a lot of money to Homer. Besides—"

I was about to point out that his mysterious disappearance, and the gray horse and all, might easily be construed as very good proof indeed. Had I been positive that Buck had *not* held up that train, I could have spoken more freely. But I had harbored the very same idea that Homer was probably acting upon, so I felt some constraint.

He guessed what was passing through my mind, I think, for he laughed softly. And that amused laugh was stronger assurance that any amount of protestation.

"It would throw things all out of gear, though, if he pulled me on suspicion," Buck continued. "I don't want to be arrested now for several reasons. Let's hold a council of war. The old man has to be in on this."

So we stepped over to where Way puffed contentedly at his pipe, and Buck showed down his hand without any sparring.

"You remember," he said abruptly, "those two deputies who came looking for a holdup man that time you stopped with us at the Bar-L line camp?"

"I shore do," Way answered.

"Well," Buck went on calmly, "that express car was robbed by a lone rider, who made his get-away on a gray horse. Now, it happens that I was wandering around the same country at that particular time, and this man Homer has got the idea that I'm the guilty party. There's a big reward, and he's out to

collect if he can. Dave says that Homer has just ridden into Henderson's camp. It's possible he's after me. I don't know that he is, but he told Dave quite a while ago that he was going to get me. Now, the fact is that if it came to a show-down I'd have to admit that I *was* prowling across that country that very night. I was mounted on a gray horse, and I rode him hard. Homer is wise to that. I couldn't prove what my business was without dragging a woman into it—and I'll stand off all the deputies in Valley County before I do that."

"I git yuh," old Way nodded. "Yuh don't aim t' stand arrest; I wouldn't, neither. Sheriffs 'n' courts 'n' such is all right. But when they git after a man that ain't the man, they're all wrong. By gosh, I've seen more'n one man railroaded to the pen for a reward."

"They couldn't railroad me," Buck declared. "But they could keep me in jail for months, waiting trial. And I've got to get money. The only way I can get it is out of this claim. I have a good deal at stake."

"By Jove, it would be right in Bill Henderson's mitt if you were laid on the shelf," I exclaimed. "Be one less to cope with."

"It certainly would," Buck grunted. "I think I've told you several times that I want fifty thousand dollars inside of six months. It's five now. I've got to play my hand strong."

"Well, son," the old man asked, "what's your idee? I'll baek your play from hell t' breakfast, whatever it is."

"Simply this," said Buck; "that one of us will have to watch. If any of those county officers head in here, I'll take to the brush, and keep out of trouble while they're poking around. Of course they may be after me, and they may not. But I don't want to take any chances. Until this mine is producing big money—and I know it will before long—I'm going to be on the job working at it, and help stand off this Henderson crowd. We're not through with Bill Henderson by a long shot. I don't know why they want this cañon to

themselves so badly, but they do. They're going to try their little best to get us out of here."

"I see 'em gittin' us on the run!" old Way grinned. "With this kind uh pay dirt layin' here. Say, if they knowed what we had, they'd cut our throats in the dark uh the moon. 'N' so you're a train robber, son? If that don't beat all!"

But he grinned at his little joke, and gave Buck a playful punch in the ribs to show how he regarded the disclosure.

It was agreed that the old man should mount guard at a point which commanded a wide view of every possible approach to our camp. Once we had the cross drift completed and a bunch of men working, we could snap our fingers at Henderson, and Buck could go into hiding altogether if such an extreme measure became necessary. But for the present the three of us were none too many to cope with the situation.

So the old man ambled off to the selected vantage point, and Buck and I fell to work as soon as we had eaten.

His mention of a "woman" puzzled me. I had never known him to play Lothario. And of course I could not ask him. It was his own business. But during the afternoon he told me. He had gone to Beaver Point, forty miles east of White Loco, on the railroad, to have a word with his sister as she passed through to join her father on the coast.

"And if it came to a show-down, the best I could do would be to prove by her that I was there," said he. "For I was broke, so that I couldn't even put my horse in a livery stable. I staked the gray outside of town. The train stops there twenty minutes, you know. I wasn't there an hour all told, and as I didn't know a soul there I don't suppose anybody would remember my being in town on that particular date. It would be up to sis. Think I'd drag Dot out here, and have all my dirty linen washed in court? Honest, it makes me squirm to think of the governor finding out what a mucker I have

been. He'd die of sheer mortification. Not much! I'll stick my gun under Homer's nose, and go on the dodge right before I drag my people into anything like that."

But he did not tell me why he needed fifty thousand dollars so badly, and in such a limited span of time.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMING OF DOROTHY.

About ten o'clock in the morning Way came down from his perch.

"Say," he asked, when he reached the tunnel, "is this here Homer a long, slim feller, with light hair—a reg'lar cottontop?"

"Yes," said I, "and blue eyes. He wears a black hat like mine."

"That's him, then. He's watchin' this camp," Way informed me. "I seen him climb that cut bank this side uh Henderson's. He set on a rock up there for quite a spell. Looked like he had a pair uh glasses. I'll whoop if he goes to come up here."

Buck came out of the tunnel in time to overhear this last.

"Let him come," he said. "It's no cinch he's got a warrant for me. Maybe he'll tip his hand. I'll take a chance, anyway, until I know for sure he wants me."

"All right," Way agreed. "I don't reckon he'll take yuh if yuh don't want t' go."

But Homer remained close to Henderson's all that day. I climbed to where I could look for myself, and saw his horse staked out near the cabins. He stayed there all the next day likewise. If we had actually been train robbers, the very fact that an officer was resting on his oars, so to speak, within a quarter of a mile might have made us take to the tall timber. I think that Homer banked on the psychological effect of his nearness causing Buck to get uneasy, and make some move that might betray him. I know that it bothered me—his being so close, waiting Micawberlike for something to turn up. It bothered Buck, too, for that

night he dragged his bed off into the brush fifty yards above the tunnel.

Homer rode into our camp the next day at noon. Buck was in the tunnel, and despite his assertion that he wouldn't take a chance he remained there—which privately I considered a wise move. Art got off his horse, nodded to the old man, grinned at me, and proceeded to roll a smoke.

"Well," he remarked, "I guess the drinks are on me, after all."

"How's that—oh!" I suddenly recollected our last conversation. "Yes, I guess they are."

He switched the talk at once, asking questions about the claim, bantering me about turning prospector.

"I guess you all figure to get rich here, eh?" he drawled. "Be coming out of here one of these days with about forty thousand or so?"

"Maybe," I grunted. I did not like the tone of him, nor the obvious meaning.

He continued to chat lightly for a few minutes. Then he rose and swung across his saddle.

"So long," he said. "See you again pretty soon, maybe."

He had not once mentioned Buck except in that one indirect fashion. That seemed a trifle queer.

"Pretty fly deputy, that feller," old Way grumbled. "What's he hangin' around for? Why don't he do some-thing'?"

Homer had us guessing, which is probably what he intended. Buck crinkled his brows, but made no comment. He continued to sleep in the brush, however. Also, we made it our business to watch Homer. He took up quarters again at the Henderson camp.

"Devil take him!" Buck grumbled once or twice. "If he wants me, why don't he come and get me?"

But Homer merely hung about like a hawk waiting a favorable opportunity to swoop. And we continued to dig and wheel from morning till night. Our cross drift was growing apace; and so far as it extended the gravel was rich with gold. We planned the details of

larger workings over our evening fires —albeit, two of us at least sat with ears acock, listening for footsteps that might put a vastly different complexion on our plans. There was yet, we estimated, a week's hard digging, then Way was to strike out for men and tools. We had rather given over looking for trouble from Henderson—not that we underrated the possibility, but largely because Homer worried us a good deal. He stuck to the camp below, and he watched us as faithfully as we watched him. The old man kept tab on him to that extent. He was not there for pastime, that was sure. A deputy sheriff in that country does not hang around an isolated mining camp a week at a stretch merely to kill time.

And during that week the Henderson activity became more pronounced. With the coming of the fat man, three or four more laborers went to work. Quite a gang busied themselves under Henderson's directions. Mr. F. Gordon Hopper, by the way, removed his fat presence shortly after his attempt to buy us out.

Buck came to breakfast one morning with a queer bit of news.

"Did you fellows hear any stir on the flat last night?" he asked first thing.

"No. Why?" I inquired.

"I heard somebody going along the cañon," Buck told us then. "I thought they were perhaps going to have another try at our horses, or some deviltry or other. So I sneaked along in my sock feet—and I want to tell you that the walking's blamed poor in cotton socks. What do you suppose they were at? Three of 'em—old Bill himself was one. Digging and rooting around up there in the middle of the night I hung around for two hours. They were still at it when I came back and turned in. Now, what do you make of that performance?"

"Workin' nights, huh?" Way sat back and tugged thoughtfully at his beard.

"Say," he announced after breakfast, "I'm goin' t' look into this night business. Yuh betcha."

Henderson's outfit was at work on the lower claims. Way bade us keep cases on Homer ourselves, and went off with his gold pan under his arm and a shovel on his shoulder. He came back at noon, chuckling and looking puzzled by turns.

"Of all the gol-darn funny business I ever see," he related, "this here Henderson layout takes the cake. Know what's up? Them fellers is saltin' these here claims to a fare yuh well."

"Salting the claims!" I echoed.

"Egg-zactly. Lookahere."

He exhibited a pinch of fine gold dust and three or four tiny nuggets.

"Now," said he, "I dunno their idee in wastin' good gold thataway. Probably Bill Henderson he's got some crooked deal on. It don't matter no-how—'tain't *our* funeral. Well, they've sunk some prospect holes on the flat back a ways from the channel. I git colors—pretty thick, too—every place they bin workin'. That ain't strange. They'd *orer* be gold all along this here cañon—stands t' reason it ain't all bunched under this bank. But I take a pan here 'n' there along the creek. Places I panned twice before, y' understand. 'N' every pan runs about three times as much as they do before. They've salted her. Gold don't grow like mushrooms."

"I suppose their scheme is to salt it systematically, and then unload on somebody," Buck surmised. "That would account for their being so dead bent on getting this claim. If a practical miner came to look over his property, he'd naturally be trying to find out what we had. If our part of the creek didn't show up worth a cent, he'd be bound to think it queer that Henderson's ground above and below is rich. Because evidently Henderson is dead sure this claim isn't worth a hang. He simply wants a clean sweep to pull off whatever he's up to."

"I reckon that's the way of it," the old man responded. "But we don't care. Let 'er go, Gallegher! We don't scare worth a cent, 'n' we won't sell. Say, wouldn't it be a josh on Bill Henderson if somebody buys his salted claims,

strikes the kind uh stuff we got, 'n' makes a barrel uh money?"

That prospect afforded us considerable amusement. It was quite possible. Certainly if Bill Henderson knew what we had he would be making the dirt fly on his own property with a legitimate end in view. As it was, old Way's discovery established what Henderson's actions had made us strongly suspect—that he was crooked from the ground up.

This knowledge, however, was of no particular value to us except as it confirmed our idea that we might look for anything from him. But we had believed that from the beginning. We had no idea what his next move might be, and we gave it scant thought, for Art Homer still worried us far more than Bill Henderson.

We continued to work and watch out for them both. And the following morning Way had scarcely gotten to his post when he signaled that some one was coming.

"Better lie low," I advised Buck.

"Not much!" he retorted. "I'm going to keep right on working. If he wants me, he can come in here after me."

"In that case," I returned tartly, "what's the use of the old man wasting his time keeping lookout?"

"Oh, all right," he growled. "But I sure do hate to hide out when I haven't done anything."

He took his belt and gun off the post in the tunnel where he kept them handy, and dodged into the near-by brush. And a minute later Art Homer rode leisurely up the cañon. I went back after another barrowful. When I wheeled it to the dump he was tying up his horse.

He did not mention Buck, nor did he seem more than ordinarily curious about our affairs. If there was any purpose in his visit, he kept it religiously to himself. But he stuck like a bur. I talked to him for three-quarters of an hour, by which time Way came ambling into camp, since there was no further need of standing guard. Then I went on with my work, and left him to the old man. His horse loafed on

three legs, switching flies in the hot June sun, and Arthur himself loafed in the shade, talking against time, it seemed to me. He was still there at noon. He ate dinner with us, in fact. It was two o'clock before he departed.

And he was barely turned the bend that hid him from view when three people on horseback, leading a pack animal, came into sight. Two of them were women.

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" said I to Way. "What's coming now?"

I watched them approach with something more than mere curiosity. I am not by nature superstitious, nor given to having unaccountable premonitions; but I was at that moment full of an impression that something not on the card was due to be served. My hunch, as Way would have called it, for once proved trustworthy. For when they drew a little nearer I began to puzzle over one of the women, and while they were yet fifty yards distant I saw that it was none other than Miss Dorothy Norris.

She pulled up her horse in front of me without a sign of recognition. To be sure, I was disfigured with three weeks' growth of reddish-brown beard. Also, I was plastered with dirt from working in the tunnel, and altogether must have stood forth a thoroughly disreputable figure to a woman whose male acquaintances were usually on dress parade, so to speak. Nevertheless, it hurt me a little. My stock of vanity had been pretty well knocked to smithereens on the range, Lord knows—still, it pricks a man's pride to be forgotten.

"Does either of you know where I can find a gentleman named Edward Norris?" she asked straightforwardly. "I understand that he is living or camping in this locality."

Old Way doffed his felt hat with a bow.

"I reckon you'll find him hereabout, ma'am," he replied. "He's partners with us in this here claim."

Her face lit up with a pleased smile.

"I'm very pleased to meet you," she said. "I'm Mr. Norris' sister."

"Get down, and make yourself at

home, Miss Norris," I invited. "Buck is out of camp just now."

Her eyes widened at the sound of my voice. She stared for an instant.

"Why, Mr. Allard!" she exclaimed. There was an apologetic note in her voice, and a trifle of astonishment.

"At your service," I returned lightly. "Let me help you off."

But she kicked her foot clear of the stirrup, and slipped to the ground without any assistance. So did her companions—a long, lean, stoop-shouldered man, and a stolid-faced half-breed woman.

"Tired?" I asked. "Will you have a bite to eat?"

She sat down on the old man's bed, while her guide attended to his horses.

"No, thanks. We made a noon camp a few miles from here," she replied. "But I'm tired enough. This is surely a land of immense distances. Where is Ed?"

"Oh, he's up on the hill somewhere," I returned evasively.

"When will he be back?" she asked.

"Any time almost; and then again he may not get in before night."

"What's the matter?" she demanded abruptly. "You are distinctly uneasy, if you'll pardon my saying so. And that man who just left here—who and what is he? He made a very strange remark."

"Homer? Oh, he's a fellow from White Loco," I made answer. "What did he have to say?"

"I asked at the place below, but no one there knew anything of Ed Norris, nor of this old man named Way," she told me. "Then we met this man coming away from here. When I asked him, he smiled, and said that Buck Norris was undoubtedly here, but that he was mighty shy with visitors these days. Those are his exact words. What did he mean?"

"Homer's something of a joker," I said, in as offhand a manner as I could command. "He didn't mean anything."

My assurance scarcely convinced her; I saw that plain enough; but she did not insist on putting me in a corner. I did devoutly wish that Buck Norris

would come down out of the scrub and do his own explaining. He could scarcely help seeing their arrival, I thought. It seemed to me that he should be on hand to welcome his sister when she had ventured so far in a God-forsaken land to see him. There was no sign of his coming, however, and when the old man engaged Dorothy Norris in conversation I took advantage of the momentary distraction to slip away, and dived into the brush to locate Buck.

Once a few yards clear of the camp, I went tramping noisily through the thickets, and after ascending the hill a few rods stopped to signal with a long-drawn *ps-s-st!* There was no answer. I forged on a few yards, and tried again. This time Buck replied within a few feet of me, and in another step I saw him sitting under a clump of juniper, rubbing his eyes.

"What the devil have you been doing —asleep?" I inquired peevishly.

"Sure!" he grinned. "Homer appeared to have taken root, so I bedded down. What's up? Anything new?"

"Your sister rode into camp about half an hour ago," I told him. "You better get down there and square yourself. She ran into Homer, and one way and another she seems to think there's a nigger in our woodpile."

He stared at me unbelievingly.

"You're crazy with the heat," he snorted.

"I may be crazy, but —"

I broke off short. Some one had stepped on a twig near by. The snap of it set my heart in my mouth, and Buck's hand to his forty-five. He rose to his feet, and his gaze concentrated on something at my back. The changing expression on his features made me wheel—and there, in plain view, stood Miss Dorothy Norris, gazing quizzically at the pair of us—quizzically, and yet with a troubled air.

Buck ran to meet her, caught her by the shoulders, and shook her with tender playfulness. Then he kissed her. For a second or two they seemed to have forgotten me. I sat down by the juniper bush, and rolled myself a smoke. Whereupon they joined me,

and Buck likewise had recourse to tobacco. No one said anything for a minute. We simply looked at each other. And it struck me that despite her smile there was a weary droop to her mouth, a troubled expression. I thought of the alkali dust, the rotten water, and the heat of the long miles that separated the Pinnacles from the railroad.

"Better sit down," I advised. "You look tired."

"I am," she admitted. "I'm used to riding, too. But, oh, these immense distances!"

"You made Dave spend a week traversing these immense distances, as you call them, to deliver that letter," Buck grinned. "He like to rode two good horses to death finding me."

She turned her big, gray-brown eyes on me demurely.

"I apologize," she said. "I didn't realize—then—what it meant to deliver a message in this country."

"Pshaw! That's all right," I returned awkwardly. "Really you did me a substantial favor. Look what I blundered into. We're all in the way of getting rich. If it hadn't been for delivering that letter, I wouldn't have had a share in this claim."

"Is it true, then, really?" she asked anxiously. "The mine is rich?"

"Not a mine, Dot," Buck smiled. "Just a hole in the ground. But it's going to reach the dignity of a mine before long. I'll lay that ghost before he does much walking. You'll see. You couldn't believe it, eh? You had to come and see for yourself."

"I'm so glad!" she murmured. "I had to come and see. It was getting on my nerves."

"I know," Buck returned. "Judging by the past two or three years, I am a broken reed, all right. But this time I'm making good—by the grace of a streak of pure luck."

"I'm so glad!" she repeated, in a tone of relief. "But, Ed, what about this man I met? What did he mean by that peculiar remark? And why are you up here—almost in hiding?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Dot," Buck re-

plied soberly. "This is a pretty tough country, and queer things often happen. That fellow is a deputy sheriff, and I suspect he's after me. He thinks I robbed a train."

"I don't *think* so—I *know* it. Throw up your hands!"

Homer stood right behind us. How he had gotten there unheard, how long he had been there are questions quite beside the point. He was there, and he had the drop, smiling coolly at us over his gun.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHACKLING THE SHERIFF.

Clearly Homer was master of the situation. Buck's hands were in the air. I was unarmed. Even had I possessed a weapon, the deputy personified the law. That in itself would have made me hesitate; it was beyond a personal matter.

And then in a trice all this was changed. Homer advanced to disarm his man. When a matter of eight feet separated them Buck dived swift and low, with his arms outspread—a beautiful tackle below the knees. Homer's gun cracked harmlessly, as much from the involuntary tightening of his finger as from conscious intent. He fell heavily; there was a brief confusion of arms and legs. Then Buck wrenched clear, with his own gun in one hand, and Homer's by the muzzle in the other. He backed off a little. The deputy sat up on the ground, sheer astonishment the most discernible emotion on his countenance. I could hear the quick, raspy intake of Dorothy Norris' breathing behind me. But I kept my eyes on the men.

"Be good now," Buck panted. "I'm not going to be led like a lamb to the county jail—not this time!"

"How in blazes did *yuh* do it?" Homer demanded, in an aggrieved tone.

"That's one of the advantages of a college education," Buck laughed. "I used to play football. Now, let's get down to cases. Why are you so keen to take me in?"

"Yuh just told her why." Homer indicated Dorothy.

"But you have no case against me," Buck declared. "Nothing but the weakest kind of circumstantial evidence."

"Circumstantial evidence," Homer observed sententiously, "has hung smarter men than you."

"Not the kind you've got," Buck retorted.

"Yuh might just as well lay 'em down," Homer said coolly. "I admire your nerve, and I got nothin' personal against *yuh*, but we've got *yuh* down pat. We've looked *yuh* up plumb back to where *yuh* was raised. We know that *yuh* were out uh sight for three days when this train was robbed. We know that *yuh* rode a gray hoss. *Yuh* wanted money bad. I know all about *yuh*. You're the black sheep that kept your folks thinkin' you're snow white. *Yuh* got your old man to raise money to start *yuh* in the cow business. *Yuh* touched him for certain sums after you'd blowed in everythin', and kept him thinkin' *yuh* was on Easy Street. He borrowed the money you blowed in. He ain't no business man, and when he gets hard up for coin he banks on you helpin' him out. I know there's fifty thousand dollars to be paid on or before October on a place that's been in your family for more'n a hundred years. I know that you're the sort of a jasper—I'm from the South m'self, recollect—that'd feel like a hound dawg over things like that. If *yuh* don't dig up the money for the old gentleman *yuh* get showed up—and that sure hurts your pride. If *yuh* don't make that payment your folks loses the old place, which hurts some more. So *yuh* got to get the money. And *yuh* got it from the Western Express. Ain't that right?"

"All except the last," Buck said slowly. "If I had got it from the Western Express you'd never have got a chance at me. But I didn't get it. I haven't got it yet. And you're doing your best to spoil what chance I have to do the decent thing. But I'm not going to let you. You're dead wrong, and that's all there is to it. Now, you can think

over this: I'm right here, and I'm not going to leave here. I've got a third interest in a claim that's going to produce several times fifty thousand dollars. And I've got to be on the job—we've had a tough time holding our own this far. You've been at a good deal of trouble to learn that I want money, and want it badly. I do. I'll cheerfully admit that. I'd go pretty strong to get money enough together to undo the mischief I've done. But I'm getting it on the square—digging it out of the ground."

"Aw, shucks!" Homer interrupted, with a derisive grin. "Yuh don't expect me to swallow that?"

"You can do as you please about swallowing it," Buck snapped. "I can show you pay dirt that will make your eyes stick out, though, if you want to be convinced. But I'm going to make you a proposition. You haven't arrested me, I suppose you'll admit?"

"Oh, sure," Homer grunted. "But yuh can't keep me tied up like a hoss, and yuh ain't the murderin' kind, so you'll have to turn me loose. And then I'll have to try again. That's my business. I'm an officer."

"What's the use?" Buck argued. "They'd josh you clear out of north Montana if *this* ever gets out."

Homer shrugged his shoulders.

"I was going to say," Buck continued, "that I propose to stay right here, Johnny on the spot. I've got to. You can sit around and watch me all you please so long as you leave me at liberty to work. And then when things are in shape—say, six weeks or two months from now—I'll ride into the county seat and give myself up as peaceably as a farmer, and do my fighting in court. I'll give you my word of honor on this."

"And suppose I don't take up this proposition of yours?" Homer said reflectively. "What are yuh goin' to do?"

"In that case," Buck replied frankly, "I'll empty the cartridges out of your gun, give it back to you, and see that you hit the trail. And you'll never get the drop on me again—and I'll be right here in the Pinnacles, too. I tell you,

I didn't rob that express car, and unless you fake a lot of evidence you can't convict. And this hole in the ground down here means a lot to me. I've too much at stake to let anybody take me away, or drive me away, from here just now."

Homer sat in a brown study for five minutes, wrinkling his brows, and digging industriously in the leaf mold with his boot heel.

"All right," he agreed suddenly. "I'll take your word that yuh won't try to jump the country for six weeks, and I'll keep my hands off. At the end uh that time you're to give yourself up to me personally. Mind yuh, no funny business goes, or I'll be onto yuh like a wolf. I reckon I can fix it with the old man and the county attorney. They take my word for most anything. There's my hand on it."

He rose to his feet. Buck replaced his six-shooter in its scabbard, and gave Homer his weapon. Then they shook hands, grinning in each other's faces—the pair of them. I dare say they were both aware of the chances they were taking, but even so they could smile.

"Well, so long," said Homer. He picked up his hat, put it on, doffed it courteously to Dorothy, and walked away. Buck sat down and began to manufacture another cigarette, and I noticed that his hands shook. And suddenly Miss Dorothy Norris dropped her face on her hands, and began to cry. I left them abruptly.

Down at camp the old man was on nettles over the shot. I allayed his fears, told him of the events leading up to the pact with Homer, whereat he chuckled. Then I went to work in the tunnel.

An hour or so later, while I was picking in the right-hand wing of our cross drift, voices began to echo in the tunnel, and Buck and Dorothy came making their way by a candle. They came up to the face of the drift, and Dorothy peered curiously about.

"Deep in a subterranean chamber," she said. "Ugh! It's creepy and damp in here. Where's your gold?"

We rooted through the gravel-laid

floor of the drift of bed rock and pawed and sorted over the dirt until at last I luckily discovered a fair-sized nugget, containing perhaps five or six dollars' worth of native gold. I rubbed it on my dirty overalls till it shone dull yellow in the candle gleam.

"There," said I. "The whole floor of this working is underlaid with just such pieces. Keep it for a memento of your trip to the Pinnacles."

"Thank you," she murmured. "I can scarcely believe that it is true—this digging a fortune out of common earth. But here is undoubted evidence."

She held it up close to the sputtering candle, turning it over and over thoughtfully.

"One always associates gold with banks and jewelers' stores, or the mint," she remarked. "It seems so odd."

"Isn't this a bank?" Buck smiled. "You'd think it was a pretty solid one, too, if you had to dig into it. Look at the callouses on my hands and Dave's."

"Work is a good thing," she observed. "When one works hard for anything I think one realizes more fully the value of the thing attained. We've been idlers too many generations for our own good."

"Well, there's no lack of work here," Buck replied, "if that's all that's necessary for moral and physical regeneration."

"I wish I were a man," she sighed. "I'd get into overalls, and try my hand at this. As it is, I hate to think of going back."

"I wish you could stay, but it's out of the question," Buck declared.

"Of course," she agreed. "I really should not have come at all. Papa would be wild if he dreamed of such a thing. But I was so uneasy. I had to come and see for myself."

"I guess all the wild blood didn't fall to me." Buck held up the candle, and looked her over admiringly. "You've the makings of an adventurer in you, Dot, or you'd never have got as far out of the beaten path as the Pinnacle Range."

"Perhaps," she admitted. "It does seem to me quite natural to be here. Do you remember the time I was lost in Chestnut Timbers? I really enjoyed myself, instead of being frightened to death, as every one thought I must be."

There was no more work that afternoon. Now that a truce had been declared with Homer, Buck felt more easy in his mind. And as Dorothy intended to start on the return journey in the morning, he naturally wanted to devote himself to her in the meantime. We were quite willing to idle and talk—old man Way and myself. The solemn-visaged guide and his half-breed consort—whom Dorothy had hired at the subagency after staging it that far—made their camp at a little distance.

So presently the dark closed in, and our evening fires glowed yellow and red in the gloom of the cañon. We heaped pine needles for Buck's sister to rest upon. Buck and I sprawled full length on the ground. Old man Way took his favorite position with his back against the bole of a tree. It was very still and warm, a gem of a summer night, at an altitude where the air had a tonic quality and was full of pleasant odors from the pines.

Little by little, from their talk, I gleaned the fact that her visit was surreptitious. Ostensibly she was with friends in New York. In the main, Homer's brief summary had been correct. Buck was penitently frank about it. He seemed to think I should know, although I had no wish to know. The nub of the matter was that the elder Norris, in the face of losing the home where half a dozen generations of Norrises had grown to manhood, had called on his son for some of the funds advanced several years before—which had brought Buck up with a round turn, since he had squandered everything when he struck the toboggan slide. I could understand his feelings that day when he came home to the Bar-L line camp—with nothing but a forty-dollar-a-month job in sight.

"They say the devil takes care of his own," Buck remarked, in the course of the evening. "If that is so, I must

be a prize bit of property, because I have surely been cared for lately."

"Boy," old Way put in, "yuh set out t' help a old feller that was gittin' the worst of it. If that there don't entitle yuh t' win out, 'n' win out big—why, nothin' does. 'N' lemme tell you, every dollar I git outa my share uh this claim is yours if yuh need it."

After a time we went to bed. But not to sleep. As upon the first night I spent in the cañon, the moon rose and bathed the jagged Pinnacles in a silvery glow. We lay in our blankets and talked back and forth. Old Way related weird tales of the early days. Buck became reminiscent of the cattle trails. Dorothy propped herself up on one elbow, and drank it all in. I could look across the red coals of our fire and see her, wide-eyed, intent, her face clean cut as a cameo, framed in a cloud of black hair.

But we made no mention of our difficulty with Bill Henderson. By common consent, we made light of our red-faced neighbor. She had seen enough as it was. There was no use heightening the impression that we dwelt in the midst of high-handed lawlessness.

Nevertheless, trouble was at our door, and made his ugly presence felt at dawn—in that cool, rose-tinted half hour before the sun swings clear of the sky line.

It was an unplanned move. Indeed, it came near spoiling the Henderson plans altogether, I learned afterward, being an individual outbreak, born of too much whisky.

We were getting breakfast under way, since Bill Hardy desired to make an early start over the mountains, when a shrill whoop disturbed the quiet bottom. We looked across the flat, to see a man brandishing his arms—and incidentally a rifle. I recognized him at a glance for the Steve who had presumably shot so uncomfortably close to me once upon a time. Furthermore, I saw that he was a trifle unsteady on his feet—also gloriously belligerent.

"Ah-a-ah *oo-o-oopee!*" he yelled. "I'm a wolf, an' this here's m' den! Scatter, yuh—"

He punctuated this with a bullet which smacked nastily on the high ground behind us. The half-breed woman screamed, and threw herself flat.

"Git into the tunnel, miss," old Way exhorted, and grabbed Dorothy by the arm. Upon which, seeing that he was attending to her safety, Buck and I dived for our weapons. Buck's Colt lay on his blankets. My rifle was in its case, and though it was the arm I would have preferred in a scrimmage there was no time to pick and choose. My revolver was handiest. I unlimered it, and began to throw lead.

The trouble hunter across the flat was working the lever of his gun as though he meant to exterminate us. But his aim was poor, or overhasty, like our own. All of a sudden I saw Buck spin, and clap one hand to his leg. With that I dropped on my haunches, and steadied the wavering muzzle of my forty-five on the Henderson man. With the crack he seemed to crumple up. At any rate, he went suddenly out of sight. I ventured a backward glance then. There was old Way down on one knee, peering over the long barrel of his Sharp's.

"By gum, yuh beat me!" he grumbled. "I'd sure 'a' settled *him*. I was just gittin' m' bead down fine."

"Lie down there, you chumps!" Buck called to us. He himself was stretched among some weeds, only the top of his head visible. I looked around again. Neither Bill Hardy nor his wife were in sight. They had taken to the brush. It was none of their feud, anyway.

"Hurt much?" I asked Buck.

"Nothing to speak of," he replied.

"I believe yuh got *him*," Way said. "Let's go see."

I am no more bloodthirsty than the average man, but I was keyed to an abnormal pitch, and therefore I was distinctly disappointed to find no testimony of my marksmanship when we stole warily to the spot whence the self-styled "wolf" had dropped from sight. Neither was there any trace of blood.

"I was sure I hit him," grumbled I.

"I reckon yuh didn't. *Oop!* Yonder he goes—let him have it!"

Again the old man knelt and squinted along his sights. A good two hundred and fifty yards down the flat our late fusillader was legging it like a good fellow, having evidently concluded that he was not the only wolf in the cañon. The old buffalo gun roared, and my six-shooter followed suit. Buck likewise sped a bullet or two. But he won to safety around the first bend in the cañon wall as we each took a second pop at him. We let it go at that, and ran back to camp. Dorothy had already quitted the tunnel and reached her brother. She was frightened. That was evident in the whiteness of her normally pale face and the slight quiver of her hands. But she was game. Buck sat slitting the leg of his overalls with a pocketknife, with a pool of blood gathering under him.

"This is just a scratch, Dot—nothing to bother about," he was assuring her.

Once his leg was bare, it revealed a ragged wound in the flesh to one side and below the knee.

"That don't look like no bullet hole," Way remarked.

"It isn't," Buck growled. "We'd all qualify for the booby prize when it comes to shooting. A dozen shots at least, and not a clean hit in the lot."

This was absolute truth. The gash in his leg came from a flying piece of lead where a bullet from the other man's rifle had shattered itself against a boulder ten feet from where Buck stood.

"Boys, we shore got t' improve our shootin'. We shore have!"

The tone of disgust in old Way's voice was so patent, and so utterly comical, that even Dorothy laughed.

And that relieved the tension. We helped Buck over to his bed, and while Dorothy aided him to dress and bandage the gash in his leg we laid fresh fuel on our fire, and called loudly on Bill Hardy to come out and lend a hand with breakfast.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNDER ARREST.

Bill Hardy was all for making tracks at once. He had no stomach for battle. As I remarked before, it was not his fight. He did not relish being shot at. Neither did we—only we had little choice except cowardly flight. - It was sink or swim with us. And I do not think we reckoned much on the chances. We were too much on the warpath over this ugly turn of affairs. We would have been perfectly willing to lock horns with Bill Henderson on a gunpowder basis, and clean him out, or be cleaned out. Last Chance was no place for noncombatants. But Dorothy flatly refused to go. Buck was injured—suffering. He needed care.

Neither flat commands from Buck nor arguments or persuasion from Way and myself served to move her. She wormed out of us something of the situation, which only made her the more determined to stay. She was not afraid. How could we work—or fight, if fighting became necessary—with a crippled man to care for? Which was excellent logic. She would not be a Norris, she declared, with a toss of her head, if she ran to save her own skin. And more to that effect. The utmost concession she would make was to write her friends in New York to practice a little further deception on her father.

"I don't like to," she admitted. "But I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Papa will never dream of anything like this. He is at home, deep in his beloved books. I simply can't go away and leave you this way, Ed. I'd be dreading all sorts of things. Anything might happen in this dreadful place, and I'd be a nervous wreck if I didn't know what was going on."

There was nothing for it but to give in. So I, with a view to business, made as light of the matter as possible to Hardy, and offered him a job—him and his woman.

"No, siree," he refused. "I got a job in sight drivin' stage from the agency. None uh this for me, by gosh!"

I offered him double what any stage

line would pay. But not for Bill. That exchange of shots was too vivid in his mind. Wherefore he hurried his packing, and within half an hour he was on his way.

We held a council of war then—the four of us. Old man Way voted that he and I go down and read the riot act to Bill Henderson. I was willing, but Buck vetoed that.

"The fellow was drunk," said he. "Maybe Henderson put him up to it, but I'm willing to bet that if you go down there Henderson will disclaim all knowledge, and profess to be quite regretful. Then if you start anything you're on his ground, and he'd have a fine chance to do you—he and his gang."

"Just the same," I declared, "I'm going down to see if Homer is still there. If he is, I'm going to inject a little flavor of legal proceedings into this. I'll have that shooting son of a gun pulled. That might slow Henderson up a trifle—make him think it's time to stop his monkeyshines."

"Fat lot of good that'll do," Buck grumbled. "Have to go seventy-five miles to swear out a complaint, and be running in to a hearing, with a good chance of him coming off scot-free. You know what this county is when it comes to a shooting scrape."

"Well, I'm going to see if Homer is sitting around there letting this sort of thing go on," I persisted, and straightway set out.

But Homer was gone. The Henderson camp was deserted. I could see them working below. And having made sure that neither Homer nor his horse was about the place, I turned back. It struck me that it was scarcely prudent to prowl there alone.

During the next three days time slid past without a single ripple of excitement. We were not disturbed. Way and I labored in the tunnel early and late. Buck lay grumbling on his bed, and Dorothy tended him and made shift to prepare food for the four of us. The grub question it was that decided us on making a move sooner than we anticipated. Perhaps the presence of a

woman made us anxious to arrange things so that Bill Henderson and his crowd would be eliminated as a potentially dangerous factor. We held a medicine talk one evening, and decided that Way should betake himself to the railroad, grab three or four men, load a supply outfit, and get them to Last Chance at once. Then he should go up country and engage practical miners.

"It really ain't no use us puttin' in time by ourselves," the old man stated positively. "The stuff's there. I'll bet we got forty thousand dollars' worth uh pay dirt uncovered right now. I tell yuh, this Henderson bunch has got me guessin'. If they ever git us offn here 'n' see what's in that tunnel they'll figure t' keep us off till they've worked her out. What we need is men—a bunch uh old-timers that won't take slack from nobody. 'N' I know where t' git 'em.

"But I tell yuh, Dave," he concluded, "yuh better go out in the mornin' 'n' git another deer. We're gittin' mighty short uh grub. I'll send a pack load from the subagency. There's breeds'll come in here if I offer 'em money enough, no matter how scary Bill Hardy tells it."

Wherefore at the peep of day I was abroad with my rifle, ranging far up a ridge, for the hot days were upon us, and the deer sought the cooler heights, where the flies were not so plenty. I got one about noon—kicked him out of his bed almost. And the peaks were reaching out long shadows before I, burdened with a hundred pounds of meat, reached the last steep slope that fell away to the claim.

As a matter of strict fact, I did not reach that slope. Had I come fairly into view upon it these affairs of ours might have had a vastly different ending. For then I would have been spotted from camp, and several unpleasant things might have occurred.

As it was, I had put down my load of meat to ease my aching shoulder muscles, and stood with hands clasped over my rifle, gazing abstractedly at a great streamer of hill mist that floated whitely through a gap in the Pinnacles

like smoke blown between the serrated teeth of a giant saw. And while I stared thuswise some one *hoo-hoed* from the rear—a shrill woman's voice. I wheeled smartly, you may be sure. Through the open pines I had just traversed, where the floor of the forest lay bare of underbrush, I saw Dorothy Norris running toward me. My heart gave a great flop, and I hurried to meet her, scenting trouble. She slowed up then—and small wonder, for she was near spent, her breath coming in great, sobby gasps.

"Oh, oh!" she panted. "I thought you'd—never hear. You mustn't—you mustn't go—down there."

"What happened?" I demanded anxiously. "What's wrong?"

But for a minute she could not answer me. She leaned against a tree, pressing both hands against her heaving breast. I waited in a fever of anxiety, all manner of evil tidings floating through my brain—ambush, murder, perhaps—I expected anything from Henderson.

Presently she found her voice.

"You must keep away from the mine," she said more calmly. "An officer is waiting there to arrest you."

"Arrest me! Then what about Buck and the old man?" I cried.

"They have taken them away," she said wearily.

"Taken them away!" I echoed, like a parrot.

"Yes. Listen. This morning—well, perhaps near noon—three men rode up to the mine. This deputy sheriff, Homer, was one. Ed, of course, was lying down, helpless. They asked where you were. Mr. Way was in the tunnel. One of them called him, and when he came out they placed both under arrest."

"Homer went back on his word, then—the dirty hound!" I spluttered. "But why arrest Way?"

"No; Mr. Homer was rather apologetic. It was not about that train robbery at all," she continued. "It is a new turn in this claim fight. There are a lot of charges against the three of you—assault, attempted murder, de-

struction of property, and the like. This man Henderson swore out the warrants. Ed told me it was simply a scheme to keep you all away from the mine for a time—perhaps months. He said it would be almost impossible to get bail. I was not included in the arrests, of course." She smiled tremulously. "And Mr. Homer was very nice. He offered to escort me out, and he paid no attention when Ed talked to me. So I—well, I stayed behind to try and warn you somehow before you got in from hunting. Ed says you must avoid arrest by all means. You must watch the mine, and keep Henderson guessing. Those are Ed's words. So I waited my chance; they left a man to nab you when you come in, you know; and while he was cooking his dinner I stole away. I've been watching for you ever since."

"By Jove, you're a wonder!" I breathed. "Just as if you'd been born to this wild-West business. And so they're laying for me, eh? And big Bill is going to have us all cooped in jail so he can have a free hand? Well, that's one way of making the law serve your purposes. But I'll fool the gentleman yet."

"Suppose this deputy, or whatever he is, followed me?" she said nervously. "It's very open here. They know you're hunting; they asked casually, you know, before they showed their hand. He was watching the hills with a field glass part of the time."

"Let's get under cover, then," I proposed. "I'll get that meat. It may come in very handy indeed."

We returned to the venison. I shoudered it, and made haste out of that long strip of open pine country, bearing west to where a heavy thicket of wild plum lay under the shoulder of a high, sheer bank. Once well in this shelter, I disposed my meat on the branches of a small tree.

"I may have to live on that a week or two," quoth I. "Now I think I'll go and have a look at this deputy man. Will you stay here and rest?"

"Please, no!" she said quickly. "I'd rather go, too. But do be careful. Can

you get near the mine without being seen?"

I could, and demonstrated the fact. I knew the draws that ran to the main cañon, and so, skulking like wild things of the forest, we reached a point three hundred feet above our camp unseen. There sat Mr. Deputy as large as life on a point opposite the tunnel. He had a field glass, and he was scanning the ridges. His horse grazed on a picket. My pair of nags were tied to a tree. Buck's horses and the old man's, of course, were gone. He certainly was monarch of all he surveyed. I could not get into camp to secure food. I could not get at my horses to make a run for it. And likely I was supposed to know nothing of what had occurred, and so walk blandly into the trap.

"Well," I whispered, "he has sure got things fixed to suit himself. Let's get back and make a medicine talk, as the Indians say."

We retraced our steps warily to the plum thicket. There I sat down, for I was thoroughly tired with the day's tramping. Dorothy followed suit. For a long time neither of us spoke.

"What are you going to do now, Mr. Allard?" she suddenly asked.

"It seems to me," I returned slowly, "that the problem is: What are *you* going to do?"

CHAPTER XV. THE SWINDLER'S GAME.

She regarded me with troubled inquiry in her eyes.

"You see," I continued, "I am, as it were, outlawed. The gentleman below has me cut off from my base of supplies. I will have to lie low in the hills, keeping an eye on that claim to see that Henderson does not take possession and despoil it. It is fifty miles to the nearest point where you could take stage and get out of the country—at the sub-agency. Besides, I haven't a blessed dollar in my pockets. And I don't suppose you thought to bring your purse when you left camp."

"I didn't," she confessed. "I see that I promise to be a white elephant."

"No, no," I assured. "But, don't you see, at best it's going to be pretty tough on you. It's no joke to have neither food nor cooking utensils, and to lie out in these mountains at night. A couch of pine needles, and the star-flecked sky for a roof *sounds* picturesque. For a person used to at least the common comforts of life, it involves considerable hardship, to put it mildly. Furthermore, for your own sake, the sooner you are out of this country the better."

"I don't mind roughing it," she asserted. "I'm not made of china. And I hate to run away. I'm just as anxious as any of you can possibly be to hold that mine. I don't think you realize what it means to Ed. I'd fight for it—if I could. Oh, I wish I were a man! Isn't there *anything* I can do, Mr. Allard, besides running away at the first opportunity?"

"You proved more than equal to this occasion," said I heartily. "You're a trump. Otherwise by now I would have been headed for the county jail, and Last Chance would be left to these crooks. But, say, not to change the subject or anything, aren't you hungry?"

"Yes," she admitted.

"So am I. We've got plenty of meat, thank goodness. So let's attend to the grub question first. Venison is one kind of meat that goes pretty well without salt—if it's roasted over an open fire. We've got to stick it out here tonight, anyway."

In the midst of the plum thicket I found a narrow gully, deep worn and inclosed by trees. I had to have a fire in order to eat at all. At the same time I did not desire to advertise my whereabouts with a wisp of smoke. Hence I sought the deepest portion of the washout, where the smoke would thin out to undiscernible vapor before it rose clear of the brush. Then I gathered bone-dry pieces of wood and some splinters of pitch pine, and therewith built a fire that gave a great heat with but little smoke to betray. When it was down to a bed of glowing coals we fell to roasting strips of the deer loin skew-

ered on forked sticks. A spring of ice-cold water trickled beside us. For myself, I have eaten many a far less satisfying meal. And Dorothy seemed to relish the vension by the number of pieces she ate.

"That was fine," she said at last. "I feel quite comfy inside now. But, dear me—"

"What a difference from home!" I supplied. "Sure is. After all, though, linen and silver, and butlers and such are nonessentials. One can get along very well without them when one gets down to bed rock."

"It seems so—if one knows how," she returned thoughtfully. "But one wouldn't want to be down to bed rock always."

"You're right there," I agreed, "or we wouldn't be straining every nerve over such projects as this claim of ours."

I extinguished the fire, and made me a smoke. Then, with sundown at hand, we once more stole down the ridge to spy on the waiting deputy. I had an idea that he would not hang about forever, since there was neither profit nor notoriety attached to my capture. I had observed the workings of deputies afield before in the cattle country. I banked on his concluding that Miss Dorothy Norris had succeeded in warning me—in which case he would soon give over the waiting game, and go his way, trusting that I would turn up and be nabbed at some other point.

We lay in the brush and watched him till the sun dipped out of sight behind the Pinnacles, and the glory of its passing flared above our heads to a far horizon. Then the dark came, and we saw his supper fire flare in the gloom below.

"Come on," said I. "He's there for the night. Let's get back to our hollow. It's sorry place for a woman to stay, but we have to make the best of it. I don't suppose you want to take chances on our friend the deputy for the sake of what creature comforts are there in camp?"

"Heavens, no!" she murmured, and edged closer to me, as if the mere idea

frightened her. Which gave me a tiny thrill of pleasure, and filled me with a strange protective emotion, as if some grave danger threatened and I was her sole defense. Quite an absurd sensation under the circumstances. No, I was not falling headlong in love with Miss Dorothy Norris. I had too much on my mind for that. But I defy any normal, unattached man to have a thoroughly attractive woman under his wing without feeling some sentiment in the matter. And I was constrained to admit when I thought of it—which naturally I did—that she was fast proving herself the sort of woman a man could love, and love dearly. Most of us have our ideals—and the male, consciously or unconsciously, is ever in search of a mate. That is one of nature's little devices. But it is not always the foremost business of life. Mentally I was much too harassed to spend my time dreaming secretly of a woman's charm. Nevertheless, it gave me an odd pang when I looked across the fire I rebuilt in the gully bottom, and let my eyes dwell on that perfect face framed in silky black hair, to wonder whose breakfast table she would be smiling across in the years to come. I frowned at the idea. What business had I thinking of such things?

The night was fairly warm, as nights go in the mountains. I dare say Miss Dorothy Norris would have appreciated a blanket or two. I had not so much as a coat to throw over her. She sat beside the fire until her head began to droop. Then she curled up on the heap of forest litter I gathered for her to rest on.

"Oh," she said, "I forgot something. Mr. Way said you were to raise the bank roll—whatever that is—as soon as you got a chance, and use it according to your judgment. How stupid of me to forget! That is just what he said."

"Good shot!" I returned. "I know what he meant, all right."

This put a slightly different face on the matter, for it meant that Buck and the old man had left our gold dust for me to get action with if I could dodge arrest. We had it cached—close to

four thousand dollars' worth of the precious metal—in the base of a hollow cottonwood. I had taken it for granted they would use it as a cash bond for their release after the preliminary hearing. I could get things going with that sum once I got my hands on it. As a last resort, I could take Dorothy and the gold to the subagency, and send her out to arrange for men, grub, and tools. I thought she was quite equal to anything as easy as that. Then I could direct operations from my lair in the hills, and checkmate Bill Henderson for good and all, even if I were a fugitive from the law.

This and many other possible plans buzzed through my brain until at length I passed gradually from reflection to slumber. I wakened with cold chills running up and down my spine. I still sat propped against the bank. Dawn was filling the gulch with a ruddy gleam, and Dorothy Norris sat up on her couch of pine needles, shivering with the cold.

"Well, I wonder what this day will bring forth?" she said.

"It's going to bring forth breakfast first thing," I returned cheerfully; and, suiting the action to the word, I rustled wood, and started a fire.

So by the time the sun was up our hunger was appeased, and we set out to spy on the deputy. I was immensely interested in that gentleman. If he remained on the spot I intended to steal into camp that night and raise our cache. Thus I could take Dorothy across the mountains, and eventually, through her assistance on the outside, get the mine working while Buck and Way were being ground in the legal mill. I could help them best by getting in shape to furnish the sinews of war. So long as I retained my liberty and my rifle I felt that I could attend to the claim end—as far as Bill Henderson was concerned.

But the deputy had grown weary of waiting. He was saddling up when we got our first peep at him. And within twenty minutes thereafter he ambled leisurely down the cañon—taking with him, however, my two horses.

"Stay here," said I to Dorothy. "And I'll run along the hillside and see where he goes, and what he does with my ponies. I may be an hour or two."

I had an idea that he might perhaps follow Homer's system and lie up at Henderson's. But evidently he had other business on hand, for he only tarried to chat a minute with the men working on the creek below the cabins. I watched him ride out of sight down the cañon. I was about to turn back when he came in sight again—without my horses. When he struck the trail that led north over the hills, I had a swift vision of what he had done. The cañon led to the open range. My horses would follow it. To all intents and purposes, he had set me afoot—so he calculated. As soon as he was out of sight I hurried along the steep hill, across a number of rocky little arms of the main cañon, and when I reached a point whence I could look a little distance there were my two nags, far down the bottom. They were for the plains, sure enough, stopping to crop a few blades of grass here and there, but drifting out steadily.

I ran till the heart of me was like to burst, and my breath came in short, dry gasps from the exertion. Finally I headed them. They perked up their ears, and suffered me to approach within ten feet. Then my pet saddle horse kicked up his heels with a disdainful snort, and scampered by, the other close at his heels. What with several weeks of idleness and then a day and a night tied to a tree, they were full of devilish perverseness.

I toiled after. A curve in the widening cañon showed them feeding on a flat. Once more I got in front of them, stealing up with honeyed blandishments on my tongue. But they would have none of me, and straightway repeated their runaway tactics. I do not recollect how many times they did this. But I do distinctly remember the impotent fury in which I gave up at last as I seated myself on a boulder and watched them canter away. I was more than ten miles from camp, and my feet ached from running over rocks.

That settled my hope of getting started to the subagency that day. It was mid-afternoon when I rejoined Dorothy, who was in a fever of anxiety over my long stay. I was in no shape to start on any fifty-mile jaunt. But I was angry and reckless enough to take chances. I had observed the Henderson forces at work below. So I marched boldly into our camp, raised the gold dust first, and then packed what grub and blankets I needed into the brush above camp, where I could get at it under cover of the dark. Dorothy lugged supplies like a good fellow. Once the stuff was out of the cañon, I built a fire and cooked a square meal. After that I felt better. The loss of my horses assumed a less provoking aspect.

"Well, partner," said I, when I settled down to rest, "we're better off than we were. We've got grub and bedding. In the morning we'll hit the trail. You'll be better away from this center of disturbance. Do you think you'll make an efficient treasurer and business agent for the Last Chance Mining Company?"

She looked her inquiry, and so I set forth the details of the plan I had formulated, and what it would be necessary for her to do. The first thing was to see Buck and old man Way. Even from the county jail, through an attorney, if in no other manner, they might arrange to send out men and supplies. But if not I knew a lawyer in Helena on whom I could depend.

So presently it was evening. I made a comfortable bed for each of us, and we lay down to sleep.

What with sheer weariness and the scant slumber of the previous night, I lay like a log until the sun glaring hot on my face awakened me. I sat up with an imprecation on sleepy-headedness. It was half past eight. I rose, and took a peep around the bush at Miss Dorothy Norris. Like myself, she slept the sleep of the just, her hair tousled over her cheek, and one arm stretched limp on the blanket. I made a good start on the breakfast before I called her.

We had made our camp not so far back from the tunnel. In fact, we were directly above it, but well screened by thick brush, which covered a level strip of ground that ran to the top of the bank that rose sheer from the tunnel entrance. I took a chance on the smoke from the fire, seeing the deputy was gone.

Thus as we sat eating I pricked up my ears at the sound of voices. I listened a minute. They drew nearer. In that thin, clear air sounds carry wonderful distances, especially if one is at some height.

"Somebody," said I, "is coming up the cañon. Several somebodys, I should judge. Let's sneak up to the edge and see who they are and what they're up to."

We had full command of the bottom embraced in the claim. If Bill Henderson had any idea of jumping it, I was in a position to give him a merry time before he drove his stakes. But Bill was not bound on such crude work, though he was among those present. His scheme was smoother than that, it transpired.

There were five in the party. Henderson and the same Steve whose glancing bullet had crippled Buck and made him an easy prey to arrest. The others were not of the Henderson type, judging by their dress. They seemed more like prosperous men of affairs. Watching their actions as they approached, examining the ground here and there, and listening to Bill's steady flow of talk, I wondered if Henderson was about to unload his salted claims.

They came up within a few yards of the tunnel. They were directly under me, so that I was looking down on their hat crowns. What was more to the point, I could hear every word that was said—particularly when Henderson spoke, for he habitually conversed in the voice of a roaring bull. And what he said in answer to a question made me stiffen and growl an oath in my throat.

"Oh, yes," he bellowed, "that work was done right lately. But it don't amount to nothin'. Them fellers had

an idea they would strike high-class dirt in there. But it's as I've said—it runs pretty uniform everywhere, and it takes rich dirt to make handwork pay big money on a placer. So they only made fair wages. They got sick uh that, and sold out to me. I've got a clean sweep, and, believe me, gentlemen, a little capital will make this gulch hum."

I drew back from the edge, boiling over. I even forgot Dorothy until she plucked at my elbow.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered.

"Do!" said I. "I'm going down there and spoil his little game right away quick."

"Oh, be careful," she murmured anxiously. "Please be careful!"

"Sure, I will," I responded impatiently. "You stay here. I don't want those fellows to get in the tunnel. Don't you see, if Henderson finds out what we've got—why, there's no telling how far he'll go. Besides, he's passing this off as his property. I'm going to queer that part of the deal."

I ran along the bank till I found a place to scramble down. This took me beyond sight of the group below. Once on the bottom, I ran again. But they had not entered the tunnel, and so at sight of them I dropped into a leisurely walk. Their backs were turned to me, and I stepped softly.—I was within twenty feet before they were aware of my presence. I had my Remington well to the fore, balanced carelessly in my right hand, where I could get quick action.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said I.

Henderson's jaw dropped for an instant. I give him credit for nerve, but he was certainly surprised. And the next step I made was a long one, and hasty, bringing up the rifle as I did so, for Steve reached for his gun.

I don't know why I didn't plug him on the spot. I was aching to hurt some one just then, and, being on my own ground, I would have been amply justified. It was his third attempt. But instinctively I slashed at him with the rifle barrel as if it were a club. It

caught him fair alongside the head before his Colt was clear of the scabbard. Then I turned the muzzle on Henderson, with his man Friday stretched limp between us.

"You dirty crook!" I stormed. "You just make a break at me, and I'll give you what you need. You've sure got a gall to pass this claim off as yours."

The other three stood agape. In fact, they had little chance to do anything else—the thing happened so quickly.

"Gentlemen," said I, with a grin, "are you looking over Henderson's property with a view to buying?"

"Why—ah—er—yes," one of them owned.

"Well," I announced, "you are welcome to buy the whole blamed cañon, as far as I'm concerned, but don't pay over any good money for this particular claim, because Henderson doesn't own it, and never will. It was located by a man named Way, and is now owned by him, Ed Norris, and myself. I overheard Henderson's statement just now. It was a lie—absolutely. Furthermore, you'll probably get skinned if you do buy. Every prospect hole, and most of the creek bed above here, is salted. You know what that signifies."

"This feller's an outlaw!" Henderson cut in. "There's been a deputy sheriff out after him for a week. This talk uh his is pure bosh."

I laughed. I was mad clear through, but for once I had the best of him.

"Call it what you like," I retorted. "Your claims are salted, and these men will know they're salted if they go over them properly. And you daren't stand there and say you ever bought this claim. If you didn't buy it you certainly can't sell it. You're a pretty bunglesome crook, if you ask me. The location is on record, and that settles it. I suppose you thought it was a cinch. You had an idea my partners couldn't raise bondsmen. Well, they did—and I'd hate to be in your shoes when they hit this cañon to-morrow."

This took the wind out of his sails entirely. He stood and glared. Of course it was pure bluff on my part, but it worked to perfection.

"Mr. Henderson," one of the three strangers asked crisply, "do you own this claim or not?"

"Why—ah—well, you see——"

But he could not get beyond a stammer with me staring him straight in the eye and keeping the muzzle of my rifle aligned on the pit of his stomach. His plan had miscarried, and he hadn't the heart to brazen it out. I think perhaps his mind was turning uncomfortably on the possible arrival of Buck Norris and old man Way.

"You say these Henderson claims are salted?" the man who seemed to be acting as spokesman asked me.

"I certainly did say so," I responded. "But you don't need to take my word for it. Look at 'em. Buy 'em if you want to. It's none of my business. But don't touch this property. It's not in the market."

"The deal's off." He turned abruptly on Henderson. "If you can try to put over anything so raw as that, I don't want to examine your property at all."

At this juncture Steve began to show signs of returning consciousness.

"Pick up your hired thug," I snarled at Henderson, "and get off this claim. And don't forget there's a package of trouble waiting for you if you try any more of this funny business."

He helped Steve to his feet. The three strangers walked away, and the precious pair of ruffians trailed after. I stood in front of the tunnel, watching them, and I was more than a trifle surprised to see Henderson turn back as soon as his man was able to navigate alone. He headed straight for me. I said to myself that if he were hunting trouble I was in an excellent mood to accommodate him.

But he came up with a much abused air, the corners of his mouth sagging dolefully. His expression of hurt disappointment was ludicrous.

"What do you want now?" I asked.

"Great Scott!" he mumbled. "That there was a awful bunch yuh handed out to me. I never done nothin' to *you*—and yuh go and queer a forty-thousand-dollar deal."

"Oh, no, you never did anything to me!" I snorted. "Go and tell that to the birds. You tried—that was all. If that's what you came back to say, you can hit the trail. I don't like your company."

"Now, don't get sore. Lemme explain," he said placatingly. His manner became extremely confidential. "Lemme tell yuh. There's a chance to make some money—big money. It's this way: Them three fellers—you know, the men that was here—why, they——"

While he was speaking, he kept edging a little closer to me, gesturing, and jabbing a forefinger to emphasize his words. In his small blue eyes there was no trace of purpose or anger. It threw me a little off my guard, and he got within reaching distance. The sudden break in his speech came with a swift, vicious, lifting blow which would undoubtedly have knocked me cold had it landed. But I was not lean and quick for nothing. His fist grazed my jaw as I twisted my head sidewise. He clinched before I could use the rifle, and we went to the ground like a pair of struggling dogs.

Now, the details of that ruction have always been a trifle hazy to me. I do not recall how I got loose from his bearlike arms. But the Remington went by the board, and we both gained our feet, smashing, lunging, kicking. I may be a moral weakling, but there was never anything the matter with my physical attributes. In addition, I was crazy with rage. I have heard great stress laid on a cool head in fighting, but my private opinion is that the man who sees red, and fights with his heart and soul in the thing, is hard to down in a rough-and-tumble scrap.

For a big man, Henderson was wonderfully quick on his feet; but I was quicker. The long days of hard labor in the tunnel had put my arms and shoulders in rare trim. By all calculations, Bill Henderson should have whipped me in about two minutes. He was big, and a fighter of the rough-house variety. But the fact remains that after a hazy period in which I

had only one idea and one aim, and that to smash the great, red face that confronted me, I battered him to his knees, and, with his guard down, I uppercut him with every ounce of energy left. The punch took him under the jaw, and stretched him as I had stretched his man Steve with the rifle. But I felt the bones in my hand crack, and the pain of it shot clear up to my shoulder.

And as I stood panting, beginning to feel the raw bruises on my face, licking my split and swollen lips, a voice at my elbow cried passionately:

"I hope you've killed him—the treacherous brute!"

I had forgotten till then all about Dorothy Norris, watching from above.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NEW WAY OUT.

We left Bill Henderson where he lay, and, taking a bucket of water from the creek, climbed the hill. From the top I saw him wending his way unsteadily down the cañon. If he felt half as used up as I did, he was a sick and uncomfortable man indeed. But I assured myself it was worth the price. I had checkmated him at every move.

Dorothy got a tiny mirror out of her hand bag, and permitted me a view of my countenance. I was a sight. One eye nearly closed, and fast taking on the complexion of a boiled beet; my nose swollen to huge proportions; both lips split and thickened where his knuckles had smashed them against my teeth; sundry livid bruises; bits of skin knocked off here and there; and blood smeared and splattered all over me.

"I'm sure battle-scarred," I remarked lugubriously. "But it can't be helped. It might have been worse."

"They're honorable wounds," she said gently. "And I'm going to dress them."

She had the makings of a capital nurse. I was surely a sickening object, but she did not falter. It was ample consolation for the pains I endured to be fussed over by her, I felt; and presently I was washed and bandaged and

clean—even if terribly marked. My broken hand was the worst, but save wrapping it tightly there was nothing either of us could do.

"I never understood how men could fight like wild beasts," she said, as she bound a slice of bacon fat over my discolored eye. "Not until just now. I prayed for you to kill that man. I felt as if I could cheerfully club him myself. Maybe it's inhuman, but I couldn't help it after I saw what led up to it, and how he began. Didn't you hear me screaming from the top of the bank?"

"No," I confessed. "I was too busy."

"Well, yes, you were rather busy," she smiled. "And I think that business transaction will settle Mr. Henderson for a while. It should."

"Hope so," I responded. "But it does seem as if I'm never going to get you out of these hills. Something always comes up in this trouble hole."

"It doesn't matter," she said gently. "If papa doesn't find out and worry, I'd just as soon be here. If it's necessary for you to be right here to hold the mine, don't mind me. If Ed loses his interest, papa will have to know the whole shameful story before long anyway. And that train affair—"

She stared out across the cañon, and her eyes suddenly grew misty.

"Forget it!" I said—roughly, perhaps, for I had to fight back a queer feeling of wanting to comfort her in a way that was impossible under the circumstances. "There's nothing to Homer's suspicions, or these fake charges of Henderson's. Buck and the old man will be out before long. In the meantime, I'm on the job."

"Which is lucky for us all," she put in.

"Thanks," I returned. "I've made a mess of everything I've undertaken in life so far. I hope I can make good on this."

Though sick and sore, I felt that it was best to get Miss Dorothy Norris started, not only for her own sake, but to get things moving at Last Chance. So I began to make preparations to

start. I was in the midst of arranging enough food to last us on the long hike to the subagency when a loud hail sounded under the bank.

"More excitement?" I wondered. "Well, I'll have to see what's on tap now."

"I'm going with you," she said.

I did not forbid this, but took up my rifle, and stole once more to the top of the cut bank over the tunnel. Somebody raised the loud yell again, and when I peered cautiously over there was one of Bill Henderson's prospective buyers looking uncertainly about.

"I wonder what he's after?" I muttered. "You stay here, Miss Norris, and I'll go down and see."

He stood with his hands in his pockets, sizing up the tunnel mouth, when I sighted him next, but he spied me coming, and walked over to meet me.

"*Whe-e-u*, man!" he exclaimed, as soon as he got a fair look at my battered face. "That must have been a peach of a scrap, eh? You certainly put a beautiful head on Henderson—but you didn't win in a walk."

"Hardly," I admitted. "But is there anything I can do for you? Because, if not, my time is—well, limited."

"My name's Cotton," he said briskly. "I know something about placer mining. The other two fellows are shy of this cañon on top of this morning's developments. But I'm curious, and there's something queer about this deal. It looks like good ground even if Henderson did salt for some sucker. And it struck me—well, if your claim was punk, you know, you wouldn't be so dead anxious to hang on. You've stuck in the face of considerable trouble. What's at the bottom of this?"

There was no particular reason why I should unfold my troubles to a stranger, but neither was there anything to conceal. And Cotton impressed me as a "square" man. So I told him the yarn as briefly as possible, beginning where Henderson started to run it over old man Way. But I did not say anything of the richness of what we had struck.

"By Jove!" he said. "I see through

their scheme now. Because I happen to know that short, fat fellow—Fatty Pierce, alias F. Gordon Hopper. Oh, yes, he's crooked as a dog's hind leg. He probably framed the thing up, and stayed in the background while Henderson did the work. I see—I see. But they offered you—good money—for a supposedly poor piece of ground. And you wouldn't sell. Therefore you must have struck it pretty good. That's only logical. What you going to do with it? Work it yourselves, sell out for a good, fat chunk of coin, or incorporate and put out shares? If you've got a good proposition, I'm open for business."

"Wait a minute," said I, for it struck me all at once that here was a chance to get over a bump or two. If I could get Cotton to act for me, it would solve a problem in short order. "I'll show you what we've got—and Henderson never tumbled why we wouldn't sell or be run out; he was so sure the cañon ran low values."

I took a pan, and, going into the tunnel, filled it with gravel from the right wing of the cross drift—the richest. This I washed in the creek. When the yellow grains and three or four sizable nuggets showed in the bottom of the pan, Cotton whistled.

"Nuff said," he remarked. "How much of a bed of pay dirt have you got?"

"Enough," I answered guardedly, "to be worth while."

"Now, Mr. Allard," he said briskly, "I'm a practical miner. I've just taken a bunch of money out of a group of claims in the Moccasin Mountains. I'm open to buy an interest in this—if it shows up right. Furthermore, I judge from your yarn that I could be of considerable service to you and your partners. I'm not out here for my health. Show me your layout, and I'll make you an offer."

"Anything I might do would be subject to my partners' consent and approval," said I. "And they're cooped in the county jail. I'm practically on the dodge myself. If you'll go their bonds so they can get back here, and send me out five or six men and about

a ton of grub right away, we can talk business. We've got the goods."

"That's a pretty large order," he observed. "But you show me what you've got, and I'll say Yes or No."

Before I took him in, I yelled up to Dorothy to keep an eye out, and drop a rock if any one showed up. Then I took shovel and pan, and we went into the tunnel. Having the experience to guide him, Cotton sized the layout up quickly. He took the shovel, and went to bed rock for himself in divers places. Then he gathered a pan of gravel here and there from the floor of both cross drift and tunnel. This he washed, nodding his head over the result. After that he prowled all along the foot of the bank the length of the claim—figuring, I suppose, on the possible area of gold-bearing strata. Finally he turned to me.

"I'll pay twenty-five thousand dollars for a one-fourth interest in this claim," he said, as coolly as if he had been offering me twenty-five dollars for a horse.

"But," said I, "I can't make a deal single-handed."

"Oh," he chuckled, "I'll get those two fellows out on bond pretty quick. I'll gamble that much on the strength of making a deal with the three of you. I'm merely telling you what I'll pay. I confess that this looks good to me."

"Come on up the hill," I invited, "and meet a sister of one of my partners. We can talk things over better. I'll show you what we took out in less than a week's clean-up."

So we climbed up to our retreat in the brush, and Mr. Cotton was properly introduced to Dorothy. Also, I showed him the hefty sack of gold.

"Say," he broke out suddenly, "this Bill Henderson is a fool. I'm going to buy his claims for a song. Of course, you fellows may have the only good ground in the cañon, but there should be more if it's thoroughly prospected—bound to be. Of course I'll make that a side issue. You can bank on my offer."

So far as I was concerned, twenty-five thousand looked big to me, and I

felt sure it would to Buck and Way—particularly if Cotton bestirred himself to get them out of jail. We talked over the details of getting in men and supplies. Cotton promised to get an outfit started within twenty-four hours after he struck the railroad; and he further declared that he would arrange bail as soon as he could get to the county seat.

"That'll be easy," he assured me. "If I can't make a cash bond go, I know plenty of cowmen down there that will fix it for them on my say-so."

This took a load off my mind. And presently Cotton rose to go, for they proposed to start at noon, his companions being thoroughly disgusted with Bill Henderson and all his works. We shook hands, and he started down the hill.

"What do you think of him?" I asked Dorothy, while he was still within hailing distance. "Would you like to go out to the railroad with him and his friends? It would save a fifty-mile walk for you."

"Mr. Cotton is very nice," she murmured. "But—but—do you dislike walking so much?"

She crinkled up the corners of her mouth, and I laughed. And so without further parley it was settled that I should take her to the subagency. Thence by stage she would reach the county seat and Buck before Cotton got him out on bail.

Wherefore, since time was fleeting, I took a little food and two pair of blankets in a pack across my shoulders, and we set out for the top of the divide.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE.

Until I stood watching the stage roll north in a flurry of dust I did not fully realize whither those few days of close companionship had led me—I felt so utterly alone, with a great blank lying in the future. I had only memories for consolation. It is a long way from the West to the East, and I still had my spurs to win.

But I could do no good for any of us by indulging in self-pity, mourning over what might have been. Still, I doubted, as I faced homeward, whether I would ever see Dorothy Norris again, whether she would even care to see me, and the doubt cast a blue tinge on all my thoughts. I fancied that as we drew near the subagency she somehow changed in her attitude, a sort of constraint afflicted us both, as if we had come to a fork in the road. At least that was my impression—and it hurt.

By dint of crowding myself, I reached Last Chance the second day from the subagency. Everything remained undisturbed. I stole down and took a peep at the Henderson camp. That, too, wore a deserted air. But I did not investigate too closely, for I imagined that Bill might be tempted to take a shot at me; I had put such an effective quietus on his get-rich-quick scheme.

I spent three forlorn days on watch above the tunnel. I had no means of knowing whether Cotton would live up to his promises. I thought he would; he seemed the sort of man one could bank on. But I had seen so many obstacles arise in our way since we took up this gold venture that my outlook was acquiring a decidedly pessimistic turn. Time dragged wearily by. I could not even work to pass the hours—my hand was too sore. One thing I did establish to my satisfaction—the Henderson camp was abandoned for the time being.

Then one afternoon when I had fallen into a doze under a tree, a wild whoop in the cañon wakened me with a start, and when I reached the edge of the bank there sat Buck on his sorrel horse, shouting:

"Dave! Ho, Dave!"

Close by was old Way, resplendent in new overalls and Stetson hat, a fat cigar clamped in his teeth instead of the charred old brier. I nearly fell down the hill in my haste.

"Well, old-timer, you sure held the fort, eh?" Buck leaped from his saddle, and brought a howl of pain by grabbing my crippled hand. "I'm proud

of every mark on you, hang your old hide! I guess big Bill overmatched himself for once."

But old Way only looked at me and shook his head.

"You'd orter took the ax t' him," said he.

"How did you make out?" I asked. "Did Cotton fix it up for you? How do things stand? I've simply been standing pat here."

"Everything is lovely," Buck replied, as he stripped the saddle off his mount. "Your man Cotton arranged bail—he's all right, that same Cotton—and it's a ten-to-one shot the case will never go any farther. Red-faced Bill sold his claims to Cotton for a thousand dollars—the whole bunch. Cotton is dead anxious to have a quarter interest in this at the figure he gave you. The express-car robber was caught the other day down near the Dakota line, and Homer's full of apologies. We've got ten men and a six-horse team load of supplies on the trail somewhere between here and White Loco. Everything is coming our way. I guess that's all. Sis sent her regards."

As Buck said, everything was surely coming our way. The supplies and men arrived promptly. Once the stuff was packed in from the end of the wagon road things began to hum. Buck and the old man tore into the work. Last Chance shortly became the busiest place in the Pinnacle Range.

'Close upon this Cotton returned, and we closed a deal with him which gave us twenty-five thousand dollars capital. Way and I turned it over to Buck. We had gone through a hard mill together, and, as old Way said: "If this here money'll he'p yuh git your fambly troubles straightened out, go to it. Last Chance'll produce plenty for all of us." And Buck thanked us soberly, and sent the twenty-five thousand to his father.

As if we had caught the tide of our fortunes at its turn, everything seemed to make for success. The first week's clean-up, after we got our sluice working, ran into unbelievable figures.

"Boys," said Cotton, "if this ground holds out for six months we'll all be

millionaires. I don't know about you fellows, but *I'd* like to write my check for a cool million—huh? I want money—slathers of it. You can get the earth if you have the price."

From week to week we increased our force, and with each clean-up our individual bank accounts grew by leaps and bounds. Old Way began to plan a return to "Io-way." Buck became a different being. The old moroseness vanished, and he sang at his work.

For myself, while I was keenly appreciative of what favors the gods of chance had bestowed upon me, I could not muster up the exuberant spirit of my partner, nor the quiet content of the old man. Perhaps it was pure reaction from the strains and excitement of our first weeks in the cañon. But I had no definite plans, no concrete object to strive for. Buck had his people, his home, and a circle of friends to drop into whenever he chose to leave the mine. Cotton was driving straight for his million, with all his heart in the achievement. And Way looked forward to ending his years in peace and plenty at the place of his birth. They all had clean-cut purposes lying ahead of them; I had none—none that were tangible, calling for action. I had no kin that I knew of beyond distant relatives whom I had never seen, and did not care to see. Since I left college I had burned my bridges behind me, along with the fortune that fell to me when I came of age. So I had, instead of friends, but a limited number of acquaintances, who knew and remembered me chiefly as a spender, with an amazing capacity for strong drink.

But I had learned my lesson in that respect—as had Buck. The glitter of the bright lights would never get me again if I could help it. Still, a man must have some purpose in life, something to attain, if there is to be any zest in living. Having become independent, with the necessity for hunting a job, of rustling for a bare living, far behind me, I seemed to be a trifle at sea. I had to make a niche for myself somewhere, but I could not decide where to start.

If Dorothy Norris had sent a line — But she had dropped out as suddenly as she had come into my life. Probably, I said to myself, with a little bitterness, she considered those days at Last Chance a closed book—one that she did not care to reopen. Reason told me that was but good judgment, for I had lived hard and fast; I knew that I suffered by comparison with the men she must have known. Still, I resented it. I could not suffer being so soon forgotten.

Buck came home from town one day, and clapped me on the shoulder, smiling happily.

"Well, David, old socks," said he, "the ghost—my ghost—is laid. I've put the governor in a position to clear Chestnut Hollow—and he'll never know, until some day I screw up courage to tell him, what a thoroughgoing rascal I've been."

"Amen!" I grunted.

"And now, like the prodigal son," he continued, "I think I'll go home and help eat the fatted calf. This thing is running like a machine. We can both be spared. Come along with me. You'll enjoy that old Norris place. Will you come?"

"Oh, I don't think so," I returned thoughtfully. "Thank you just the same, Buck, but I'll stick to the Pinnacles for a while—till I figure what I shall do first."

"Pshaw!" he said carelessly. "There are no strings on you. Come on—I'll write the governor and Dot to expect us."

"I won't make any rash promises," I said evasively.

He eyed me for a minute, then switched the conversation to another channel. And presently I left the house—for we had attained to the dignity of a comfortable log dwelling, a Chinese cook, and the like—and went for a walk.

Buck went ahead with his plans for a visit home, but he made no further mention of my going. Old Way decided to stick to the mine until fall. The habits of a lifetime, the mountains,

the great silent open, held him fast. He spoke of going, but always in the future. So he bade us get out and have a run for our money, as he phrased it. He would stay on the job; he and the indefatigable Cotton, who had a gang toiling on the Henderson claims with glowing prospects in addition to his interest in Last Chance. So I was free to go if I wished. I only lacked an objective. A year earlier I would have set gayly forth in search of the adventure that a well-filled pocketbook can always afford to the wanderer. But I knew what would likely befall me in any of the cities I had known of old if I set out in the moody, half-reckless spirit which beset me—and I was desirous of avoiding that.

At the end of every two weeks one of us, with two men, convoyed the clean-up to the railroad. The Last Chance strike had gone ringing up and down the country, and the Pinnacles swarmed with prospectors, and likewise with certain characters who were not above playing highwayman where any large amount of gold was involved. So we rushed it out of the cañon before it got a chance to accumulate. It beheld that Buck went in the next trip.

He returned with a parcel of assorted mail matter. I was sitting on our front step, idly watching the water pour in a muddy stream down the long sluice to a great mound of tailings, when he came out with a letter in his hand.

"Well," he said quizzically, "I'm going to leave for home Saturday. Are you coming along?"

"No. I don't think I will," I returned.

I hated to offend him, but—well, I

did not want to go. I felt that it would not be good for my peace of mind to go. I shrank from a hurt such as I knew Dorothy Norris had power to inflict upon me. It seemed foolish, but I craved a sight of her and the sound of her voice. I did not want to go just as a friend. And her silence seemed a sufficient warning.

"I wouldn't mind betting a new hat that you *will* go," Buck drawled. "By the way, here's a letter for you."

With this rather puzzling remark, he tossed the envelope to me, and stepped back inside.

I did not recognize the writing, but a glimpse of the postmark made my pulse beat a trifle faster, and I ripped it open with eager fingers. The contents were brief enough, in all conscience, but things somehow took on a different, a rosier, color when I read:

DEAR MR. ALLARD: Ed tells me that he is coming home soon, but that you evince a certain reluctance to tear yourself away from the charms of Last Chance. I hope nothing will prevent your accompanying him when he does return. My father extends a cordial invitation. Sincerely,

DOROTHY NORRIS.

P. S.—I *dare* you to come.

I put the letter in my pocket, and stalked into the house. Buck had his nose between the sheets of a newspaper.

"Well," I blurted out, "you win that bet."

"My son," he said solemnly, but with a roguish twinkle in his eye, as he looked up, "you never want to let a woman bluff you."

And then he bestowed upon me a friendly grin, and disappeared behind the *River Press*.

Roy Norton's new novel—"THREADS"—will be published complete in the first August POPULAR



REGARDING AUTOMOBILE RECORDS

JOHN R. THOMAS, the Philadelphia automobile dealer, has two great records to his credit. He covered the distance between Richmond, Virginia, and Washington, D. C., in seven hours and ten minutes, a time which has never been equaled. He was also the first man to run a machine from Washington to Boston, a trick which he turned in twenty-four hours.

Sauce for the Gander

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "Footprints," "Chain-Driven," "The Meddler," Etc.

In which you will hear of the desperate measures taken by Mr. Allaire to win his daughter away from a matinee idol with whom she had fallen in love. It cost him fifty thousand dollars and the laughter of the town. But it was worth it.

WHEN my daughter Phyllis had arrived at her sixteenth year, and I realized that she was destined to be a very beautiful woman, my anxiety began.

Phyllis' charms were even at this age of a lavish nature to attract more masculine attention than pleased me. I thought also that I already saw evidences of a temperament destined to be a menace to my peace of mind. Phyllis and I were alone in the world, and as I was known for one of the very rich men of the city, of an old New York family, and possessed of a reputation for never being able to say "No," the procession of young men—and older ones also—that marched up and down the marble stoop of my city house made me think that before long the steps would attain that thin-edged appearance peculiar to museums, libraries, and other public buildings.

But Phyllis was charming to all, and partial to none, and arrived at her twentieth year heart whole and fancy free. In fact, she was too heart whole for my entire satisfaction, as I knew that to keep her with me much longer would be like trying to persuade a swallow to remain under your eaves when the bird migrations have begun. I desired Phyllis to marry, and provide me with grandchildren, and the man whom I had selected as her future husband was

Duncan Ogilvie, the only son of my most valued friend.

Duncan was a splendid fellow even though it was said of him that he had, while at Yale, somewhat exceeded the speed limit of sober progress. But he was a manly chap, with an excellent heart, a level head, a magnificent physique, and money enough in his own right to put him beyond all mercenary considerations even had he been the sort to harbor them. On leaving college he had gone to France to study architecture, and this had consumed four busy years, during which time he had distinguished himself in his work—and come near being extinguished in such pastimes as motor racing, fox hunting, and aviation. He returned home to find his little playmate, Phyllis, a woman grown, and he showed his honest appreciation of the various subtle changes by promptly falling head over heels in love.

I was never able to determine the state of Phyllis' heart toward Duncan, for any sentiments which she may have entertained were masked by the sort of refined torture which a warm-hearted woman can find in her conscience to inflict upon the unhappy man who is so foolish as to let her see that he is hopelessly entangled in her toils. Duncan took it very hard, and passed successively through the ardent, stormy,

tragic, and sulky phases, finally settling down to a mood which reminded me of a dog waiting to be fed.

This went on for a year, and then the blow fell. Phyllis came to me in my study one night, threw her beautiful, bare arms around my neck—for she had been dining out—crushed her face against my shirt bosom, and confided in me that she was madly, desperately, frenziedly in love with an ass of an actor named Launcelot Romayne. Phyllis did not mention the fact of his being an ass, but I knew that already, having several times witnessed his gambolings upon the stage, and a few off it—in clubs and restaurants.

"And, oh, daddy," breathed Phyllis, "he loves me, too. Isn't it wonderful!"

I laid down my cigar, poured the rest of the soda into my whisky, and gulped it down before answering.

"It is, indeed," said I. "It is always a matter of wonderment how the matinée idol finds time to love a new girl."

"Daddy!" cried Phyllis. "Launcelot is not that sort. Of course it is natural that a man so gifted should have all of the women mad about him, but he doesn't care a snap for any of them. Why, do you know, his secretary answers all of his love letters, and Launce—Mr. Romayne—doesn't so much as read them. He loves nothing but his art—and me." And the soft arms were around my neck again, while her warm lips brushed my cheek. "He told me so," breathed Phyllis.

"And when," I asked, "did he put you in possession of this valuable intelligence?"

"Only to-night. He was one of the dinner guests, and he took me out."

"He took you in," I corrected.

"Oh, daddy, don't joke—please! If you only knew what it means to me!"

Phyllis' voice was hot, intense, and carried me back to the not too discreet days of my own youth, when I was known as "handsome Jack Allaire." I knew what it betokened to hear such a timbre in a woman's voice, and to see that distant, misty look in a woman's eyes, though many years had passed since I—God forgive me!—had evoked

them. Phyllis came by her temperament honestly.

"Nonsense!" I answered briskly. "It's none so serious to be in love, sweetheart; it's getting out of it that raises the deuce."

Phyllis stepped back and surveyed me with a puzzled look.

"You don't disapprove, daddy?" she cried, with involuntary incredulity. My daughter knew me only as a lover of books and little children, with a taste for landscape gardening and the breeding of horses.

"Disapprove!" I echoed. "Why should I disapprove? To be sure, I can't recall that we've ever had any stage people in our family. But, to tell the truth, my dear, I have always had a very kindly feeling toward actors and actresses. They contribute so much to the gayety of life, and I'm afraid that we more exclusive folk are in danger of becoming a little dull. To tell the truth, I have given considerable thought to this very subject. Only the other day I went with an architect to look at a house on upper Fifth Avenue—"

"What!" cried Phyllis.

"Yes," I answered. "This old family mansion of ours here on Washington Square strikes me as being a little out of date—"

"Father!" Phyllis stepped back, letting her arms fall to her side, and staring at me with her blue eyes almost round. "Are you taking leave of your senses? What! Leave this dear old house, where our family has lived for almost a hundred years?"

"But it's so far from the theaters and the club and the restaurants," I protested.

"There's always the limousine," said Phyllis; "and, besides, you scarcely ever go out at night, and you like the walk to the club."

"Yes," I assented; "but when I no longer have my daughter the order of my life will probably undergo a change. Gayety is the only stop gap for sadness. I have long realized, darling, that I could not hope to keep you with me always, and I rejoice in your happy-

ness. When am I to meet your—eh—Launcelot?"

I thought that Phyllis winced a little at my ready resignation and easy acceptance of an ass of an actor for a son-in-law. But she recovered herself, and went ahead with an enthusiasm which seemed the least bit forced.

"He is coming to call on you to-morrow morning at eleven, daddy, dear, to ask you formally for your daughter. He is really most punctilious, and the soul of honor. He told me that if he had thought that there was the slightest chance of my accepting him he would have asked long ago for permission to pay his addresses—" She dropped her eyes. "It all came about so suddenly. It was like a plunge into something heavenly and *couleur de rose*."

It struck me that a dive into a tub of red grease paint might have been an apt simile, but I was too wise to say so. Instead, I asked:

"How did it all come about, my dear?"

"Well," said Phyllis, "you see, daddy, I was first attracted to him through his genius. I've seen him in everything he's played for several years. Then one day after I came out we met at a studio tea—a bohemian affair—and the very next morning he overtook me in the park, and asked if he might ride with me, and I couldn't very well refuse. Afterward we seemed to run across each other constantly here and there, and it really seemed as if destiny was drawing our lives together. Tonight he begged to come as far as the house with me in the brougham, and as I knew how servants chatter I sent Delphine home in a taxi, and, oh, daddy, it seemed as if we had been wafted here on the Magic Carpet!" Her eyes began to glow again, and I poured myself some more whisky.

"Did he kiss you?" I asked; and perhaps my voice came near betraying me, for Phyllis gave me a startled look, and I added hastily:

"You needn't answer that question, dear. Of course I realize that when a

girl is engaged—" And I gulped the whisky neat.

I doubt if Phyllis heard me. Her face was rosy, and the mist had come into her eyes again.

"When do you wish to marry?" I asked. "In the spring, I suppose."

"Launcelot is terribly impatient," she murmured shyly.

I rose to my feet. "Well, well," I said, "as the Ancient Arrowmaker says in Hiawatha: 'Thus it is our daughters leave us— Comes a youth with flaunting feathers—' Which is quite apt, when I come to think of it. He played one of the cocks in 'Chanticler,' did he not?"

Phyllis did not look particularly pleased.

"He was the *Shanghai*," she said rather shortly, "and he hated the part. It was not worthy of him. Oh, daddy, dear, you must see him in one of his romantic rôles! He is such a magnificent fencer—and dances divinely—" She half closed her eyes.

I did not feel that I could stand much more, so I took her pretty shoulders in my two hands, and drew her to me.

"All right, little daughter," said I, kissing her. "And now you had better go to bed, as it's very late, and you look tired. I'll expect your Launcelot at eleven."

And, with many kisses and murmurings, and a few tears, Phyllis went up to her waiting maid.

When she had gone I sank back into my chair, sick and giddy. All of my knowledge of my daughter went to convince me of the danger of appearing to oppose her in a matter of the heart. She was of the legal age, and in the velvet-covered, steel-ribbed grip of a violent infatuation. Loving her as I did, I really believe that I could better have supported her death than her marriage with such a man as I suspected this actor of being.

I looked up finally to catch sight of myself in a mirror, and was shocked and startled. People say that I support my fifty-four years lightly, but huddled in that chair, lined of face, and dull of

eye, with my hands clenched on the carved lion heads, I looked seventy.

"Come!" I said to myself. "This will never do." And I got up, closed the door, and went to the telephone, where I called up Duncan's apartment, to learn from his manservant that he was at the Union Club. So I called up the club, and presently recognized Duncan's cheerful voice.

"It is Colonel Allaire," said I. "Come down to the house at once. I want to see you."

I could hear the gasp in his voice as he asked: "Anything wrong with Phyllis?"

"She is quite well," I answered. "Come down."

A few minutes later he was in my study.

"For Heaven's sake, colonel," he cried, "what is the matter? You look like the devil."

"Duncan," said I, "do you happen to know an ass of an actor who calls himself 'Launcelot Romayne'?"

"Yes, I've met him several times at the Lambs. What about him? You don't mean to say—" His face grew rigid.

"Phyllis is infatuated with him," said I. "She insists on marrying him. You know Phyllis, Duncan, and what it would mean to oppose her."

"But—why, colonel—this man Romayne—it can't be! He's the most unutterable rotter! He's—scum!"

"I am not surprised," I answered; "but this would not be the thing to tell Phyllis. Now, Duncan," I said, "I want your help. I know my daughter, and I know my world. Romayne is coming to see me at eleven to request my daughter's hand. I intend to give my consent, but to insist that the engagement shall not be announced for two months. By that time I hope to have overcome this infatuation."

"What! You are going to give your consent!" Duncan cried. If I had told him that I purposed to play the rôle of *Virginius* his tone could not have held more horror.

"Phyllis has lost her head over this man and his profession," said I. "It

is the glamour of his stage performances that has got away with her. Now, Duncan, do you happen to know any 'show girls'?"

The boy looked very much embarrassed.

"Don't be silly," said I. "In your life of man around town you must have met a few soubrettes. I want to make the acquaintance of a pretty and rather common young thing with the necessary amount of eyes, hair, teeth, and such a figure as is in demand for the front row. And I want to make it to-night."

"Why to-night?" croaked Duncan, with a stare.

"Because I wish to ask her for dinner when we have Romayne, which will be Sunday night."

"Oh, come—" growled Duncan.

"Leave this thing to me," I said. "Desperate cases require desperate remedies."

Duncan reflected for a moment.

"All right," said he shortly. "I fancy I can manage it. Come on!"

So out we went and hailed a taxi, Duncan giving the address of a well-known restaurant which I had never entered. We whirled uptown, and found the place filling up with people who had been to the play. The head waiter knew Duncan, and in answer to his query answered:

"She hasn't come in yet, Mr. Ogilvie. I'll tell the doorman to watch for her."

Duncan and I took a table, and were served with a bottle of champagne. We had not long to wait, and presently I looked up to see the head waiter coming toward us, followed by two young women, who, whatever else might have been said of them, could make undeniable claim to a full share of physical attractions. Both were tall, superbly made, and extravagantly gowned, and there was in each pretty face, under the shadows of the enormous hats, that peculiar blending of coquetry and hardness to be found in women of their class. At sight of Duncan they smiled and dimpled; then, as their limpid eyes flitted to me, I saw a glance exchanged, and the foremost whispered something to her friend.

We rose, and Duncan presented me, and at the sound of my name there came a flash from either pair of eyes. I ordered an elaborate supper, with a profusion of champagne, and before the little party was over we were as intimate as old friends. Under the excitement of the moment I found myself inflated with a sort of artificial buoyancy. Such occasions, I may say, were no new thing to me, although the interval of twenty-five years since I had played host to similar gatherings made me at first a little stiff. But this was quickly swept away in the fevered pulse which reacted to the best wine the establishment could afford. In fact, I surprised myself, and there is little doubt that I surprised Duncan, for his eyes had a peculiar, bewildered expression as they met mine across the glittering table.

When the supper party was about to break up, I said:

"I don't know when I have passed such a delightful evening. Duncan tells me that I am getting grubby for a man who is not yet old, and I believe he's right. I have always had a great affection for players, and I mean to cultivate them in the future, if I may be encouraged to do so. Won't you?"—and I looked at the girl on my right, whose name was Maisie Summers—"won't you, Miss Summers, and you, Miss Mayfield, do me the honor to dine at my house Sunday night? There will be only my daughter, your friend Duncan, Mr. Launcelot Romayne, and myself."

Their faces were amusing. If they had been asked to the residence of the ambassador to the Court of St. James they could have looked no more astonished. But with the cleverness of their class they were quick to conceal their surprise.

"It is just a little bohemian party," I explained. "I will get somebody to amuse us afterward—this Tyrolean troupe we hear so much about, if it is possible."

The two girls exchanged glances.

"Have you an engagement, Maisie?" asked Miss Mayfield.

"I promised to dine with Teddy van Zele," said Maisie, naming a gilded youth whose father was an old friend of mine; "but I'd heaps rather go to Mr. Allaire's. How about you, Daphne?"

"I have an engagement, too," said Miss Mayfield; "but I'll break it. Thank you so much, Mr. Allaire. I would be *so* pleased to meet your daughter," she added languidly.

I expressed my obligation, then asked if we might not sup again in the meantime, and this also was arranged. I had been devoting myself to Maisie, who, it appears, was playing a small part in a risque and very popular Broadway production. Apparently I had made a good impression, for after she had overcome the shock of being invited to dine at the house of one of New York's most exclusive set she became confidential, telling me what a pleasure it was to meet a gentleman she had heard so much about, and how tiresome it was to waste her time with silly boys.

Duncan was silent and thoughtful when we said "Good night," and he looked at me rather queerly. It was evident that my ease in society of this sort puzzled and surprised him, and I might also say aroused certain suspicions in regard to the interval of a quarter of a century which I assured him had elapsed since my last appearance on Broadway.

Mr. Launcelot Romayne called punctually at eleven, and was ushered into my study. He was a tall young man, with a handsome, dissipated face, and a graceful, well-developed figure, elegantly attired.

His first embarrassment was quickly overcome by the friendliness of my greeting. It was evident that he had fortified himself against a possible ordeal, and from the odor I recognized the stimulant as absinth.

Ass he might be, I thought, as he sat opposite me in a chair which I had placed with the view of examining his face; but there was a hardness about his eyes, and a suggestion of cruelty, brutality, in the lines about his mouth

which warned me that here was no mean antagonist. Personally, I have no doubt that he would have preferred my furious opposition, when he might have contrived to elope with my daughter, counting on my love for her for ultimate forgiveness and a handsome settlement; and I smiled inwardly at the thought of the free advertising of which my course was depriving him.

His voice was sonorous, and his accent affected, his periods stately, and his manner of speaking declamatory. He thought exceedingly well of himself, did Launcelot; and, quickly recovering from his first surprise, began to glow and expand. I flattered him and his profession until a less conceited man would have got suspicious. Then I ordered cocktails, which my butler served in a stupefied way. Then more cocktails while he dilated and expanded until his face grew red and his breath redolent. Then I sent for Phyllis.

She came in, sweet, shy, tremulous—and for an instant I understood the emotions of the homicide. Like a fluttering dove she flew to Launcelot, and I got my first thrill of savage exultation at the shadow which crossed her face as it was drawn to his flushed one and the fumes of spirits reached her. Leaving Launcelot, she came to me, and I took her in my arms. The empty glasses had been removed.

Back to Launcelot she went, and they listened, hand in hand, while I stated my conditions, which were that not a word of the engagement was to be breathed for at least two months.

"By that time," said I to my daughter, "your aunt will have gone to Europe. You know, Phyllis, she holds silly views in regard to players, and I don't wish to have her down my throat for having given my consent. Personally"—I turned to Launcelot—"I have a high regard for the stage and its artists, and, as I told Phyllis last night, I hope that in the future our lives may be infused with rather more gayety. In fact," I added, with an attempt at a roguish look, "I am myself acquainted with some very charming members of your profession."

"What!" cried Phyllis, with a startled look.

"Quite so," I answered. "Only last night Duncan dropped in after you had gone to bed, and as I was feeling rather excited over your news I went out with him to a restaurant, where I made the acquaintance of two very charming actresses—Miss Mayfield and Miss Summers."

Launcelot's mouth drew down a trifle at the corners, while Phyllis' lovely face wore an indescribable expression.

"What a very odd thing for you to do, daddy!" said she. "I hope you didn't tell Duncan about—me?"

"It seemed to me that he had a right to know," I answered, "considering that he has long cherished hopes of his own. Don't you agree with me, Romayne?"

"Decidedly," he answered, with sonorous emphasis.

"And Duncan introduced these women?" demanded Phyllis.

"Duncan presented me at my request. In fact, we had supper together. You see, my dear, since we are to have a stage celebrity in the family, our house must necessarily be a hospitable one to the profession. I even went so far as to invite these ladies here for dinner—quite informally—Sunday night. We will have a little frolic, and I will try to get the Tyroleans, or some similar troupe. But of course nobody must know anything of the true state of affairs."

Phyllis moved uneasily in to the chimney, and Launcelot gave a little cough.

"These ladies," said he, "are scarcely in the same—ahem—class——"

I interrupted him. "Now, don't be snobbish, Romayne," said I genially. "These are two very nice, pretty girls, just knocking at the doors of their careers. One day they may be stars, when we will be very proud of their acquaintance. I have a box for this afternoon to see 'The Studio,' and I would like to have you both come with me. Miss Summers plays a small part."

"I'm sorry," said Romayne, "but, you see, I'm playing myself."

"And I have a tea engagement," said

Phyllis, a bit snappishly. Both of these facts I very well knew.

I expressed my regret, and, with a few more felicitations, excused myself. Shortly afterward Launcelot left.

Phyllis was very silent at luncheon, and seemed to be thinking deeply. That afternoon Duncan and I occupied my box, and I sent a floral tribute containing a little pendant to Maisie. We went "behind" after the second act. Maisie was profuse in her appreciation, and again I observed the peculiar gleam in Duncan's eyes. To tell the truth, had the issue at stake been less grave, I could have found it in my heart to enjoy the situation.

Our dinner Sunday night was a very gay affair for everybody but Phyllis, Duncan, myself, and my butler, who has been in my service for thirty years. Phyllis had very red cheeks and veiled eyes, and I am sure that Martin suspected me of incipient paresis, for the surreptitious glances he threw me were filled with concern.

I appeared to be the gayest of them all, and told stories which I would have wished to kick a man out of the door for telling in the presence of my daughter. Launcelot usually capped them with better—or worse, according to the point of view. Duncan's gayety was fitful, alternating with spells of abstraction from which he was roused like a partridge from the laurel. All of us but Phyllis drank more wine than was good for us, and afterward a French troupe sang, and executed a dance recently imported from Montmartre. Maisie and Daphne surprised me in their aplomb, and passed from the sedateness of a Laura Jean Libby duchess to the frivolity of Maxim's, finally coming to earth with their grand manners when it came time to leave, Duncan and Launcelot seeing them home.

When they had gone, Phyllis fell into abstraction, which I broke by saying:

"A charming fellow, your Launcelot."

"You think so?" Phyllis answered coldly. "To-night was the first time I ever knew him to be horrid—and really,

dad, those two women were dreadful! Please don't ask them here again."

"My dear," I exclaimed, "you astonish me! Every career must have its beginning—" And I read her a little homily on the beauty of charity and the evils of snobbishness, to which she listened in a sullen way which I had never before seen in her. "Personally," I concluded, "I don't know when I've passed such a pleasant evening. But of course you are mistress here, and if you object to these young ladies I will ask Launcelot to present us to some of the brighter lights of the profession."

The next morning I called for Maisie, and took her to Sherry's for luncheon. My presence with her was commented on, and of course got to my daughter's ears. In the two weeks which followed I cultivated Launcelot, who introduced me to his leading lady, a pantherlike creature, who was very gracious to me. She and another star of the theatrical firmament dined with us the next Sunday night, and these ladies, being more sure of themselves than the little soubrettes, the dinner was noisier than before. Yet, strange to say, my daughter was not pleased.

This sort of thing continued for about a month, during which time I saw a good deal of, and was seen a good deal with, Maisie, whom I presented with a modest pearl collar. My daughter while riding, attended by her groom, met us one morning in the park, for I had given Maisie a saddle horse, and, being a California girl, she was an admirable horsewoman. Phyllis' face as we stopped to speak to her was interesting—to me, if not to Maisie, who turned to me after we had gone on, and said:

"Jackie, you're all to the good, but Phyllis looks as if she would bite."

Duncan's attitude was peculiar. Once when I was in an expansive mood about Maisie he turned to me, and said:

"Look here, colonel, there's such a thing as overdoing it. Everybody's talking like the devil."

"Let 'em talk," I answered lightly. "To tell the truth, my boy, I seem to

have renewed my youth. Maisie is a fine, high-spirited girl, and underneath her Western breeziness and Broadway slang I'm sure she has a heart of pure gold. She really doesn't care much about her profession, and, given the right conditions," I added pensively, "I am sure that she would make an excellent wife and mother." I gave a twist to my gray mustache.

Meanwhile, Launcelot was doing his best to hang himself with the liberal amount of rope which I gave him. Although in command of a good salary, he came twice to borrow of me. I added fifty per cent to the amount of his requested loan—and managed that Phyllis should learn of it.

The blow fell when one night he came to dine at my house in a condition which a cowboy might describe as "lit up," but which I would characterize as drunk. By this time he had come to regard his prospective father-in-law as a "good old sport," for I aided and abetted his intemperances whenever possible, even to the extent of sometimes getting a bit fuddled myself. As long as he felt that he was losing no character with me, his conceit was such that he had no fear of losing caste with Phyllis. And, indeed, so strong was the girl's infatuation that this assumption seemed warranted. Ye gods! There were times when at the sound of soft murmurings from the drawing-room I was forced to grip the arms of my chair and summon all my strength to keep from rushing into the room, tearing the brute from my daughter's arms, dashing him to the floor, and stamping out his life under the heels of my walking shoes. For the strain was beginning to tell on me. Alcohol and irregular hours, but most of all my anxiety, threatened my nervous system.

But although the cad still held his physical attraction for my daughter, her respect for him was dead, while her worry over my own behavior had reached a point where she was getting thin and hollow-eyed. Phyllis knew that all of this misery had come about as a result of her engagement to Ro-

mayne. She was a high-bred woman, with all the pride of her ancestry, and I was never in the slightest fear of clandestine meetings, or anything which might endanger her. My only dread was lest the peculiar physical fascination which the actor held for her might outlive her lessening respect for him. For the man, with all his vulgarity, had magnetism.

By this time my Broadway acquaintance was considerable, and every Sunday night I made it a point to give a little dinner, to which I invited those of my theatrical friends whom I considered the most common, explaining to my daughter that my politeness to his colleagues was a compliment to Romayne. As Duncan usually came, the other guests were perforce women, and although no more "show girls" were asked, it was evident enough that Phyllis did not find this society congenial.

On the occasion of which I have just spoken, when Romayne arrived in a semi-intoxicated condition, he had come with a certain stage favorite who was more distinguished for her beauty than for any great histrionic talent. Both had assisted, it appears, at a tea in bohemia, where I fancy the puzzle would have been to find the tea. However this may have been, Romayne was throughout the evening his perfectly natural, loud, blatant self. In powerful contrast to him was Duncan—cold, polite, abstemious, and with a caustic wit that pierced the buffooneries of the actor like a Toledo blade. I saw my daughter looking from one to the other, and by little mannerisms of her expression knew that at last she was coming to her senses, and beginning to recover her relative values.

Whether she asked Duncan to wait or not I do not know, but at any rate he did, and the not too early hours found the three of us alone.

"My dear," said I to Phyllis, "without desiring to criticize your fiancé"—Phyllis winced at the word—"and my guest, it seems to me that Launcelot rather strained even the elastic conventions of bohemia to-night."

Phyllis' face went dead white, and

the pupils dilated until her blue eyes were a flashing black.

"He is a beast!" she cried. "An unutterable bounder! I don't see how I could ever have cared for him. I wish never to lay eyes on him again—and I am going to write and tell him so before I go to bed. Oh, I am so wretched—so unhappy—" And she flung herself on a divan in a fit of passionate weeping.

Duncan and I exchanged glances. If any one had told me six months before that the time would come when my heart would exult at the sight of my daughter's grief, I should have called that person a fool. Yet my exultation was so great that even Duncan, for all of his relief, frowned at the expression on my face.

"Phyllis, darling," said I, "perhaps you do him an injustice. You must remember that the artistic temperament is—"

"Oh, leave her alone!" growled Duncan; and added under his breath: "It's your fault as much as his."

I stared at him stonily, but before I could reply Phyllis, raising her glistening, tear-stained face, sobbed wildly:

"Duncan is right! Between you, you have ruined my life!"

"Ruined your life!" I echoed. "And what have I done, pray tell?"

"What have *you* done?" cried Phyllis hysterically. "You know what you have done. You have filled your home with the riffraff of Broadway! You have compelled your only daughter to listen to vulgarities and obscenities not fit for a barroom! You have disgraced the home where your family has lived for generations, where your daughter was born, with the presence of women of whose reputation the kindest thing that can be said is that they are questionable—"

"Mighty little question about it," Duncan growled.

"Worst of all," continued Phyllis, "you have made yourself a topic of ridicule and contempt. You have gone about openly with this creature and have—"

"Stop!" I cried sternly. "Not another word!"

Never in my life had I used such a tone to my daughter. Its mere inflection caused her to sit up suddenly on the divan. Her luxuriant hair was disheveled, her blue eyes wide, and her pretty mouth open. The tears glistened on her lovely face. Duncan, with an inarticulate sound, stepped quickly to her side, and took one of her hands.

"If you are referring to Miss Summers," said I harshly, "let me tell you that no sweeter, nobler woman lives. If her past has been unfortunate you may be sure that she has been more sinned against than sinning. She has honored me with her entire confidence, and I respect and admire her. More than that"—I turned and glared at them—"it is my intention to make her—my wife!"

And I turned on my heel and stalked to the door. It was some distance away, and as I reached it I caught the reflection of a part of the room in a large mirror. In this particular part I saw Duncan stoop and gather Phyllis in his strong arms.

Duncan came to me the next day, and his manner suggested one of his witch-burning ancestors.

"You may be pleased to learn," said he, "that you have broken your daughter's heart."

I scowled at him, and we had some words on the freedom of a man to regulate his own personal affairs. I had never suspected the existence of so much passion in the young man's easy-going nature, and so scathing and forceful were his arguments that presently I said, with a hint of sarcasm, and a manner which I had cultivated from my Broadway associates:

"What is there in it all for *you*, anyhow?"

Duncan flushed crimson, then answered, with frank manliness:

"Phyllis says that I am responsible for the whole business, because I introduced you to this show girl. She has made our marrying conditional on my being able to break off the beastly affair."

I pondered for several moments, then answered bitterly:

"Very well. All my life has been one of self-sacrifice and renunciation, and I suppose that there is no reason that this course should be changed now just when I am in my prime. Nevertheless, I'll break it off. Take her, and be happy. Never mind me."

And I got up hastily, strode scowling into the other room, slammed the door—and executed a dance which

might have aroused the envy of Daphne Mayfield.

It cost me fifty thousand dollars and the laughter of the town to break with Maisie. But I never wrote a check with a lighter heart.

I sometimes fear that my daughter and son-in-law suspect. But it doesn't matter, as they are both very happy.

As for me, I have my books and my garden and my horses—and my dear little grandchildren.



The Deserter

YOU can put me into irons for my durn fool crime,
You can make me scrub an' labor for a long, long time,
You can set me scrapin' turret in the hot, hot sun,
You can make me scrape another when that job is done;
Yes, I'll pay my penance gladly, for I've got my sense,
An' I'll charge the pain an' trouble to experience,
I went an' I deserted like a plain fool Jack
I was weary of the navy—thank the Lord I'm back!

I was sick of young lieutenants an' of noncoms, too,
An' I thought myself a member of a poor slave crew,
I didn't like the duties or the dis-cip-pline,
An' I thought I was mistreated on the salty brine;
So I chucked away an' beat it. I was smooth, you bet;
If I hadn't come here willin' you'd be searchin' yet.
But gosh, how clean the ship is, nothin' skimped or slack,
It was me that quit the navy—an' it's me that's back!

Yes, I had my taste of freedom, an' it lasted quick;
I met a lot of hobos, an' they made me sick;
I found a lubber's labor wasn't nothin' grand,
An' I didn't care for cussin' 'stead of stern command;
My bunks was somethin' awful, an' my food was rot,
An' I missed my little hammock an' the mess we got;
I was scared of bein' captured on 'most every tack,
An'—Lord, but I was filthy, so I just came back!

You can put me into irons—I don't give a damn!
I am back again in service of my Uncle Sam;
An' I've got a navy outfit, an' my body's clean,
An' in time I'll win my place back in the big machine;
With its rules an' regulations, with its work an' play,
With its drills an' guns an' spirit, an' its good, sure pay,
With its beatin' round the oceans on the broad sea track—
Oh, I'll get it good an' plenty, but I'm glad I'm back!

BERTON BRALEY.

The Smoke

By James Hopper

Author of "Cabaygan," "9009," Etc.

James Hopper was one of the first writers to put the real life of the Filipinos into fiction. Living there for a number of years, he absorbed the atmosphere of the islands, and with his genius for imparting what he has seen and felt, he has given us in "Cabaygan" and other stories some of the most entertaining tales ever written. In this story Hopper tells of a dusky hero, an odd figure "all humps and curves, knots and torsions," a figure whose every detail you will remember, down to the toes—particularly the toes. A Filipino, but a real man from the toes up.

THERE was a murmur of voices, a hissing of feet, a bumping of baggage—and Carter stood before us at the head of the wide stairway within the cooled sala. He was very thin; his red hair was dry as rusted wire; and his khaki uniform, desperately washed, threadbare beneath the gloss of many ironings, was grid-ironed at the left shoulder just beneath the strap with peculiar darns, close and parallel, each a bit swollen like a welt. He stood there a moment, swaying a little on his long, impoverished legs, a weak smile upon his wan face; then we rushed upon him with the precision of a football team, and, half helping, half bearing him, had him stretched in one of the long wicker chairs, a ricky tinkling its ice at his elbow like a gentle little bell.

We were all shouting together, but mostly the same question. "How are things down in Samar?" we asked, all together.

He waved his hand deprecatingly. "Fine! We've learned to live on snake and hawk; the Dios-Dios men are looking for another Papa; and I am here for a month—a little bit all in."

He sat a while, content, stretched long in his chair to the faint breeze,

which, through the closed shutters, filtered in from the glittering bay; then called loudly: "Muchacho!"

The scratching and the bumping which had been going on meanwhile on the steps below the line of our sight now rose in a series of crescendos—and finally the person called "muchacho" stood in view. He had a camphor-wood chest upon his head, a case upon his shoulder, a roll of blankets across his back; a panoply consisting of a sword, a rifle, a shotgun, a belt with two revolvers, and a canteen dangled at the end of his left arm.

"Where?" asked Carter, his glance passing us in circular question.

"Here—in my room," cried Blair. "Right here, first door to the left"—and to his gesticulations rather than his words the muchacho dived into the open doorway. A clash and three dull jars told us that he was unburdened, then he was standing before us at attention. At attention as far as his peculiar physical conformation would permit. For though his little fingers were on the seams of his white pantaloons, his arms, rising away from them in two sweeping outward curves, were like the handles of an urn; and though his heels were together the legs above left be-

tween them a perfect ellipse of vacant atmosphere. His head was deep within his shoulders; he was all humps and curves, knots and torsions.

"And you call that a boy!" breathed Blair, in amused stupefaction. "And he is your muchacho!"

"His hair is a little gray," admitted Carter. "But still he is my boy."

"I hope you sleep with a revolver under your pillow," said Kent, standing frankly, legs apart, before the object of our scrutiny. "With two revolvers, and three cutlasses, and maybe a little Gatling gun!"

"Oh, he's all right," protested Carter.

"He's pox-marked; he's shaped like a banyan tree," said Kent severely, still staring hard and unabashed. "He has a slash from his right ear to his left neck which curtails his nose and increases his mouth. His eyes are small like a pig's; they are bloodshot. His toes are like can openers."

Carter was following the inventory with soft eyes. "And yet," he said dreamily, "I was touched once by those little pig eyes. And these prehensile toes, like can openers—well, for a long moment once they were a tender sight. Here, muchacho, you vamoose, pronto, dale-dale!"

With a start at this sudden roar, followed by a smile which no doubt thought itself amiable, but which, confounding as it did scar and mouth in one huge gash, was malevolent, the muchacho prontoed and dale-daled down the stairs, and vanished into the regions where pots were clashing.

Then Carter, his tongue itching as will a man's who has been long in the brush, began to talk.

"I got him"—his thumb jerked downward toward the basement—"over there." His other hand, careful of the glass it held, waved vaguely south toward Samar.

"A lot of prisoners had been brought in at the post. We had them in the ex-chapel. This had portals and also iron gates. We would leave the portals open and the gates shut, which

made a nicely ventilated jail. They had been captured here and there doing things with bolos, and were a bad lot of hombres.

"On the day of their arrival I went down to make them all safe and comfortable. I saw that the windows were all locked, the walls solid, and the iron bars of the gates good and strong. Then, to give them company, I placed a sentry there in front. He could look through the rails, and at the first sign of trouble pump his Krag—my Macabees have Krags—into the tight bunch of them. It was then I saw *him* for the first time.

"The others of the cheerful company were near the bars, a bit curious; but he evidently was superior to such frailties. Squatting in the far right-hand corner of the little chapel, he was contemplating his feet, his remarkable feet. He threw me one glance, one little, short side glance out of his little, pig-gish eyes—and I said to myself: 'By Jove, amigo, but you *are* ripe for the hemp!'

"They were, of course, all for the hemp. There had been times when I had thought this a little hard. That is, I had thought it hard that the President of the United States, in his office so far away, should have declared without consulting any of them that war was over; that in the P. I.'s all was peace, peace, peace; and that hence all those who fought were not warriors, but murderers. Maybe some of these persons did not know of the President of the United States, or were unable to grasp his delicate distinctions. I say I *had* thought so at times. I did not do so now. Not looking at this hombre. His physiog, you see, was so very much against him.

"On my round of inspection the next day I went again as far as the chapel. Everything was well. The walls held, the gate was solid, the sentinel alive, and my ape man in the far corner still admired his toes. But four or five of my Macabees were lolling—it was the siesta hour—a little too close to the bars, I thought. I shooed them off, and thought no more of it. The following

day, though, it seemed to me that at my approach I had heard a scampering of army shoes. The face of the sentry was set and serious—a bit too serious. The next day I came earlier, and more quietly—and caught them at it.

"There they were, a dozen of my worst disreputables—and best fighters, of course—pressing at the gates of the calaboose, the sentry's smile benign upon their backs. On the other side the prisoners also bunched close, so that the two parties were face to face. Some of my worthies were smoking. Inhaling till their cheeks puffed, they blew the smoke in thin, strong jets within the chapel. At each puff I could see the whole pack of prisoners contort; the wave of desire passed through them like a breeze through high wheat.

"But this was only a part of the game. Others of my men had improved upon it. They held out hands filled with curly tobacco, and brown papers and inviting matches; then at the very moment that a paw shot like lightning through the bars they backed away, just fast enough, just far enough, leaving the tempting display just beyond reach.

"The sport had been going on quite a while, I could see. Many of the prisoners, pretty sick at their countless disappointments, would stand long now without moving, a fat cigarette right beneath their nose. But they never seemed able to stand the pressure to the end. Finally, as to an epileptic fit, out would go both hands, like those of a child scooped to catch the rain—and this, coming after the long wait, delighted the Macabebes more than anything else.

"There was one little fellow, though, who never made them wait—a little marmoset fellow, twined around one bar, his pointed muzzle through. He would grab right away each time without the least hesitation, as though never in all his life he had been fooled. I suppose he had grabbed like that a hundred times before I came. And before my eyes he did so twenty times more. An innocent little fellow, not made for this world's guile.

"But behind this poor little monkey stood my man of the wonderful feet. He wasn't grabbing. He wasn't moving. He was like a stone statue. His arms hung like two arcs down his sides; his head was deep between his humped shoulders; and he just looked. Just looked from that cavern between his two shoulders—looked out of his small, piggish, red-shot eyes.

"I have told you that I was once touched by those piggish eyes. That was the time. There was in them something so wistful, such a desire, such a sad, sad, sad nostalgia of his weed and his vice, that simply at the touch of that look upon me I forgot what I was about to do.

"Instead of dispersing my brown devils, I shouldered through them, and made one of the group. And, going deep into my pocket, without the slightest dignity—I'm but a constabulary captain, anyway—I hauled out in one big pinch tobacco, papers, and matches, and pushed them directly into a hand which, without changing its position, sucked them within itself as if it had been a starfish.

"I remembered then to be angry. I turned upon the tormentors, cussed them to their barracks, replaced the sentry, and put him to grass cutting. When I had done I gave a last look into the calaboose before going on.

"My ugly man was back at his usual place in the far right-hand corner. He sat there, cuddled in the angle, his back round, his head deep within his shoulders, his chin upon his knees. But he wasn't looking at his feet. He was looking at nothing. His eyes were closed; he smoked a cigarette. He smoked it religiously. I could see each time his great chest distend, and, swollen, hold long the smoke; then slowly, lingeringly, shiveringly collapse. From his thick lips a thick gray spiral poured forth; it mingled with the thin blue wisp from the butt, rose heavily, and made a halo about his head. A halo about that head! The other prisoners stood around him in a half circle. Their nostrils twitched.

"Now, you see, in my action there

was a good deal of caprice. Mostly caprice. For those other poor devils—the little marmoset man of simple trust, all the others—wanted their tobacco just as badly. In my little cot that night I wondered if they would not kill the pet, the teacher's yellow-haired boy. By morning, though, I found my responsibility detached. The commandant had received orders from the colonel downriver. The prisoners were to be sent there to be sentenced.

"So at nine o'clock we piled them all into four long bancas. With them we threw in some thirty odd women—awful old hags suspected of—well, experiments—on our dead and wounded. We had been terribly embarrassed as to what we should do with them, so it was with joy that at about ten o'clock we shoved the long craft out into the stream. They took the current swiftly. The escort, under Minton, had been divided in four squads, each at the stern of a boat; the prisoners did their own paddling, the guns at their backs. The paddles flashed, the long canoes purred; they disappeared around a curve behind the palms.

"I turned away, feeling as if it were a Sunday morning at home. And within an hour I was again facing the commandant and another job. It was the colonel again. This time he wanted *me* down the river—me and my Macabebes.

"By noon we were all on the Q. M. launch and its trailing yawl—a hundred and twenty-five of us—churning down the river. I took out my watch. With the current, we were making an easy fourteen miles an hour; the bancas must be making seven. They had two hours the start of us; we must pass them in just about two hours. Pass them, and as we passed give a little hello to Minton, disgruntled with his detail.

"But I didn't say hello to Minton. The two hours had not quite gone when we heard a peppering fire off to our left. The river makes there a large curve; the firing was on the river. For a moment I debated landing and cutting across to it. But, looking at the

time, I saw that we must catch the bancas in about ten minutes—sooner if they had stopped. The firing, perhaps, was mainly from them, though it was mighty hot for that, and there were in it some dull detonations which were not from Krags. Or it was an attack from the shore, which they could 'run' successfully, and which I would surprise and punish.

"I yelled down to the Tagal engineer. He grinned back broadly—we were going as fast as we could go. We slid on down the river, the sound of firing getting closer, and the thumpings in our chests harder; we turned a tight loop—and debouched into a long stretch and slap-bang upon the scene.

"An ugly scene. The river here was a long, smooth stretch. On the left were high banks, a plateau at the top; on the right the shore was low, a wet jungle. And on the high bank to the left a party of Dios-Dios men, seaming the cliff, was shooting down into the river, while to the right with my glass I could see the high grass alive with bolomen. The smooth surface of the river between, what with the bullets, sparkled and flashed as with leaping trout. And beyond I saw the four bancas drifting lazily, bottoms up.

"Not only the bancas. Nearer, on the surface of the water, were a few small, dark spots—Macabebes, immersed to the neck, shooting upward at the high bank. Even as I looked one after the other the little dots seemed to crack like nuts—and I saw them floating down, bigger, yet more indistinct, filing after the bancas in a foam that was not white.

"I reconstructed later what had occurred from the slim survivors. Just as the bancas had reached the place beneath the high bank the women they carried—the villainous crones!—had set them a-rocking. Minton, chivalrous young idiot, had not ordered fire right away, for the reason that these witches might, after all, be women. He was beginning to chide them as if they had been babes when over went those long, narrow canoes, spilling escort, prisoners, women neck-high into the stream.

"At the same time from the high bank down pattered the Dios-Dios men's first volley. The prisoners and the women had immediately taken to the low bank to the right; most of the Macabebes had followed, to be hacked to pieces by the bolomen waiting there in the grass; but some, who had kept their rifles dry, had stood up in the water, firing upward at the high bank—till happened to them what I had seen.

"Well, here was the end of it before me now—the river, again lustrous and smooth, with its floating bancas, its smaller flaccid driftings. In vision I saw Minton going down to the sea with his men, asleep, still smiling and chivalrous, between the green waters.

"I jerked my hand, and the launch, looping about, churned up the river as if turning tail. But as soon as it had whisked out of sight around the curve it ran its nose deep, with eagerness, into the left bank, on the same side as the main body of Dios-Dios men.

"The shore here was lower, and a sort of trail zigzagged up the side. We avalanched out, and simply dug up that trail. When we had gotten above we deployed, still in the bush, advanced thus in open order, and broke out suddenly upon the wide, bare plateau, not a hundred yards from the Dios-Dios men.

"They were more than I had expected—about six hundred, I should say. All of the time on our way to them, on the launch, landing, up the trail, we had had but one thought—to get to them; we had had but one fear—that they might be gone. All of us, in our minds, we had already the vision of the charge—how we would shoot and cut and hack, how we would splinter arms, and cave in chests, and burst open heads. But now, as we came into sight, rather to our own astonishment, it was they that charged us first.

"They came at us, believe me, without hesitation. They dropped their guns, and came at us with bolos, bounding like goats in a tight whirl. They had red crosses painted in blood across their hearts, and their eyes popped out of their heads.

"Immediately we felt like a clever boxer with long reach who finds himself up against some bull-like fellow who gets in under his guard. *Our arms felt too long!* We had time, I think, for two volleys. They did good work, but not apparently, for those fanatics were so wedged that the dead kept on coming with the living, their heads rolling on the shoulders. There was a little individual potting—and they were on us.

"To my right and my left I knew that some of my men had broken like a dam, but also that there was a closer cuddling of the others about me. Then it was like a football game—that's the only way I can describe the thing—the milling confusion of it; efforts, heaves, and grunts; the loathsome heat of bodies, the smell of sweat, the deadly closeness; and then its weariness, the paralyzing weariness coming from that ceaseless avalanching of flesh, tons and tons of flesh, upon one, upon one's numb arms, trembling legs, and straining back.

"I couldn't kill fast enough to free myself, to get one good gulp of fresh, free air. I couldn't kill fast enough, that's all. I had emptied my Krag from the beginning of the charge. Then I pumped away with my repeating shotgun—fine at short range!—till I had emptied that. Then came my two automatic revolvers, and I was emptying those. But without the slightest apparent effect. They came and came and came.

"My red head must have been their rallying point. A bolo would flash before my eyes; I'd shoot; a limp body would drop across my thighs—and there'd be another bolo flashing up there. I was killing them one after the other as they came; but they were coming so hard that each, dead, finished his gesture before dropping. Each as he fell drew his bolo down across my left shoulder—see the parallel welts on my uniform there—each one, by some queer post-mortem precision, exactly in the same way, at the same place. The wounds afterward looked like the work of a zealous cook with cleaver

who had mistaken my shoulder for a round steak, and zealously had tried to transform it to hamburg.

"My rifle was empty; my shotgun was empty; my first revolver was empty; I was shooting with the second—and still they came one after the other, each as he died giving me his sharp little parting pat.

"Finally I had only one shot left. I let the nearest man have it right in the belly, and, with profound interest, saw him coming on as if nothing at all were the matter. Then, I think less from loss of blood than sheer disgust at the heat, at the smell, and especially at the unfair result of my last shot, I collapsed. I seemed to drop, drop, drop down a big, black, soft hole.

"I remained there a while. But less and less peacefully. I would have slept, but I was being bothered by an aggravating noise. Some one above me was sharpening a knife. It was the butcher, that's what it was—the butcher back home, standing at his marble table, and whetting his knife upon his long steel. Then a fresh patterning of water came down upon my head.

"'Thank God!' I murmured, waking. 'Thank God—it is raining!'

"I don't know why I should have thanked God even if it had been raining.. But it wasn't raining. The cool drip came from the wet clothes of a man standing above me, straddling my body as if he were the Colossus of Rhodes. I could see his knotted legs, bare to the knees—from my position they looked immense—and his white pantaloons, soaked as if for a month they had lain at the bottom of the Gandara. But I could not see above the crotch, and above the crotch up there somewhere was it that the busy knife sharpening was going on. Why was that butcher sharpening his knife? I suddenly went to sleep again.

"When I awoke a second time I seemed more conscious of my position. The shower man was still above me; still above me the busy music of his sharpening knife. I was in a little niche behind a barricade. The barricade was made of twined bodies. Over

this barricade a Dios-Dios man was climbing. Right beneath my hand was a gun—a Dios-Dios gun. I can still see the red string with which the poor thing was all tied up. I placed the muzzle of the gun against the belly of the man who was climbing—I had a weakness for abdomens that day—and pulled the trigger. There was a noise as of thunder—and the man kept on climbing. I passed away again, what with chagrin at this new proof of divine injustice and queerness of Dios-Dios anatomy.

"But the click-clack-click still went on above me. I could not rest. I cursed the butcher—and woke. He was still over me, his wondrous legs arching me like a bridge. They were mightily busy, these legs. The one against my chest was planted firmly, but higher I could see the knee giving and straightening, muscles relaxing and then whipping tense like cables mooring a boat, while the other leg, behind me, I could feel rubbing against my back, the foot shifting constantly in search of new base. The knife would not be still; zip-zip-clash, zip-zip-clash, it went on the big steel. I mumbled curses at the butcher again.

"It was an odd way to be fighting, wasn't it—to lie there, doze and wake, wake and doze? But that is what I was doing. I came to once more. This time my posture had changed. I was lying farther over on my left side, my nose nearer to the ground. I could not see above me, but I knew by sound that the butcher had not changed his mind about his knife; he was going to have it sharp. My interest, though, drew away from it to settle on an object on the ground there close to my left eye, so close that I seemed to look at it through a microscope.

"It was a toe, a monstrous toe. It was hinged sinuously to a foot, a monstrous foot. For a moment my eye wandered over the foot; its heel, projecting backward like the stern of a torpedo boat, its scales, its sole, thick and elastic, like an elephant hoof; irresistibly it returned to the toe.

"After this I seemed to have reac-

quired a new zest in life; I had an occupation which made living worth while. It was this: I must discover an exact simile for that wonderful toe. So from now on each time that I awakened with my eye close to the subject of my brooding I found a new name for it.

"They seemed very admirable then. Each came in a fever of enthusiasm; each filled me with a sense of felicity. I've had to change my mind since. They were not so good, after all. My inspiration was a little short.

"The first time I called it a can opener. Then, with more fervor, a scimitar. Successively a scythe, a sector, the claw of a crab, the thumb of a baboon. And finally, with passion, the crescent of a young moon.

"This last success finished me. I went to sleep for good. I awakened once in the launch. Minton was standing over me. Without showing the least surprise at his presence, I looked up at him sweetly, and said, in a baby's voice: 'The butcher has stopped sharpening his knife.' Which he took as a piece of tremendous irony. When I awoke again I was in a white cot of the post hospital.

"It seems that Minton had not been dead at all. Instead of dying, he had swum. With the last of his men gone, he had swum under water to one of the overturned bancas, and had drifted, hidden beneath it, till out of sight. Then he had climbed the bank, and, following it up, had made his cool appearance in time to take command from my sergeant, by now a pretty much bewildered sergeant. Rallying a little party, he had made a flank charge with it—and had cleaned out the Dios-Dios crew. He had spent one-third of my Macabebes doing it, though.

"It was three weeks before they let me out, my shoulder taking that time to begin healing. But one morning before the sun was too hot I was up in a sweet little breeze that blew from the river. It seemed years since I had seen the pueblo and the post, and they looked good to me. I hopped about, stretching to the feel of having nothing to do,

my mind deliciously blank. I went around the plaza, rolling a cigarette once in a while, put my head in at the cuartel, sat at Tionko's sipping a fizz, and found myself finally at the old chapel where the prisoners were kept.

"Everything was just as it had been three weeks before. A sentry paced in front. The portals were open, the gates shut. A new batch of prisoners was within. A new batch—no, by Jove, not altogether!

"I rubbed my eyes, I felt of my head, I pinched my arm. But my eyes were in their sockets, my head was on my shoulders, my arm felt a pinch, sure enough. Things *were* what they seemed. And *that man* was what he seemed.

"There he crouched in the far right-hand corner of the little chapel, his head deep between his shoulders, his knees drawn up apelike; there he sat, cuddled in the angle, viewing his feet—the man I had seen there three weeks ago, the pox-marked, evil-eyed villain to whom I had given tobacco.

"I made just three jumps to the commandant's office. 'Major,' I gasped, 'major, do you know that in the chapel there with the other prisoners you have one of the leaders of the river affair, one of the devils who upset the bancas and butchered our men?'

"'Who?' asked the major, without excitement. 'Do you mean the old fellow who looks like a banyan tree?'

"'Yes, sir,' I panted. 'Pox-marked. With a gash.'

"The major looked long at the little glass ball which held together the loose papers of his desk. He looked dreamily out of the window toward the palms lining the river. He seemed to forget me. When he remembered he said hesitatingly: 'Yes, I know. We've got him in there because we don't know what to do with him—'

"'Do with him!' I screeched. 'Do with him! Isn't there any tree—isn't there any rope—in this confounded village?'

"The major smiled gently. 'Fact is,' he murmured, 'there is a difficulty. The fellow rendered you a service—quite a

service—from all I can hear. You don't recall much of the fight, do you?"

"No, sir," I admitted, though even now I was beginning to feel the clouds shifting in my head as if about to break.

"Well, that fellow stood over you for about five minutes—five bad minutes—and made hash of some umpteen Dios-Dios men. They seemed to have a wild yearning to get at you, those Dios-Dios men."

"The clouds were breaking. 'Have the man brought here, major, please,' I cried excitedly. 'Have him brought here to me, major!'

"In a few minutes he came in, with his pox marks, his scars, his humps, and his curves; and as if in a deep salaam I threw myself to the ground at his remarkable feet.

"I was not salaaming, though. I had merely taken a position I remembered. Stretched on my side, I brought my left eye close—and there it was.

"Memory, confirmation flooded me at once. There it was, close to my left eye, magnified to generous proportions; there it was, the object of my only moment of poetic flight. It wiggled, prehensile, monstrous, but a little abashed—the can opener, the scimitar, the crab claw, the baboon thumb, the crescent of a young moon, the sector, the scythe. There it was—the toe!

"I rose. 'I remember, major,' I said. 'No mistake about it. He it was. He stood over me—when I couldn't stand—and plied a bolo. It sounded like the butcher back home sharpening his knife.'

"The major had been looking at me with a vague hope. The hope pulsed out. He grew suddenly very ill-humored. 'Well, that's just it,' he growled. 'That's just it! Now, what

in H-H-Hades are we going to do with the man?'

"I thought a moment—not too long. 'Maybe he can learn to unfold a cot,' I said. 'And maybe fry an egg. I'll take him for my muchacho, major dear!'

"I've not regretted it since. He's so ugly I use him as a shield. I shoved him in front of me, and thus I can march single-handed from one end to the other of Samar."

Having thus talked his fill, Carter very promptly fainted. We put him in Blair's bed. His convalescence was not quite firm; he remained there three days.

These three days were a nuisance. For from the very first Carter's new muchacho rose from the nether regions, and camped himself at his master's door. During the day he squatted and smoked countless cigarettes. He wasn't very careful about the butts, either. During the night it was worse. He laid then across the sill. And when you straddled him, thinking you would enter without disturbance, he rose abruptly between your legs, and lit a match that burned your nose—to see if you were all right.

We tried to question him. We were a little curious to know just how much he had had to do with the plotting of the river ambush. Our poor Visayan broke upon his iron impassability. And never did we find out, either, with what intention—after the bancas were overturned—he had toiled, dripping, up the bank. Nor which he meant to join—us or the Dios-Dios men—till, reaching the plateau, he saw the *capitan* fall, and ran to him to pay him for his smoke.



CERULEAN AND CERISE

Jim Ham Harris, who lives in Chicago, but was born in Danville, Virginia, is the greatest permanent color scheme that walks on two legs. He has very pink whiskers, which are a charming contrast to his very blue eyes—especially as the whiskers grow close to his eyes.

Twenty Years After

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke Oar," "The Head Coach," Etc.

Your athlete of to-day is inclined to sneer at the athlete of yesterday. His creed is that everything improves as time goes on. Ralph D. Paine tells here of a young Yale oarsman who cherished some such idea. It took a spectacular lesson from his father to convince the boy that he could learn something from the man who pulled an oar in the Blue eight, twenty years ago. Paine has himself the distinction of having pulled a Yale boat to victory on the Thames.

THE Yale varsity eight, rowed to a standstill, utterly exhausted and demoralized, gave up the fight and floundered toward the finish flag like a crew of castaway sailors. Far ahead of them, increasing the distance with every long, clean stroke, flashed the Harvard shell, the men swinging straight, chins in air, breath enough to spare for laughing congratulations that ran from stern to bow. Defeating Yale had come to be an old story, but until this year the oarsmen from New Haven had made a race of it, ding-dong, spurt and spurt again, all the way down the New London course. It rather dulled the edge of victory to see the ancient rival so pitifully outclassed.

To the throngs of Yale adherents on board the observation trains and excursion steamers, who had fondly hoped that the Dark Blue might regain its lost prestige, the spectacle was like a blight. Sadly and silently they faded away and left the scene to the noisy celebrants who flaunted crimson colors.

The Yale coaching-launch dodged through the jostling traffic of the river and drifted alongside the laggard shell. The men were hauled over the rail to sprawl upon the cushions under the awnings, their dripping bodies covered

with sweaters, while the swift launch shot upstream to carry them back to the quarters at Gales Ferry. The professional coach, old Joe Conover, whose handiwork they were, found consolation difficult. His own emotions were heavily draped in black.

"Well, you rowed your heads off," said he. "And I don't see how you could have done any more. Harvard had the beef to stay the pace—five pounds heavier per man."

"Oh, cut it, Joe," wearily muttered the tall, fair-haired captain. "They licked us out of our boots because they were the better, faster crew."

Judson Brooks, who rowed at stroke, was huddled in a corner apart from the others, gazing blankly at the river. This was his first year as a varsity man, and to be whipped by Harvard was an experience tragically novel. He was not accustomed to it. Scowling, chewing his lip, fighting back the tears, he paid no heed to the persistent, stumbling explanations of the coach. Was the college going to call them quitters, a crew with a yellow streak? Young Brooks looked back at the six months' training season of daily toil and sacrifice. And this was the end of it, a crew that was a joke to its foes and a disgrace to its friends.

When the launch reached the wharf, the oarsmen trudged into the boathouse to dress, and then climbed the hill to the living quarters, where supper was waiting. They ate hurriedly, and scattered to get their baggage together. Before departure there was a final ceremony, the election of a captain for the next season. The proceedings were brief and gloomy. Only two of the eight would return to college in the autumn. The choice, therefore, lay between Judson Brooks and the bow oar. On the first ballot Brooks received five votes. He accepted the responsibility without flinching, and his eyes flashed determination as he exclaimed, while his comrades were shaking his hand:

"I'll try. It's a long lane that has no turning. We did our best to-day. Next year's crew will have to do better."

He, at least, had something to look forward to, the bright hope and possibility of victory. Those who were breaking training for the last time had finished the chapter. Their work for Yale was done, and they had lived the four years of their undergraduate life without ever seeing one Harvard crew trail behind the Blue at the finish of this four miles of river. To them tradition meant only defeat, and the old-time glory of Yale afloat no more than a shadowy, forgotten dream.

When Judson Brooks passed out of the house and crossed the lawn, the twilight of the long, long June day still lingered. A trim motor boat was sheering in to make a landing at the wharf. A seaman in white clothes stood ready with a coil of line, and another sat beside the engine. The only passenger was a tanned, clean-built man, who looked very much like Judson Brooks, and appeared youthful enough to be an elder brother. He leaped ashore with easy agility, ran up the bank, and flung an arm across the shoulders of the disconsolate stroke oar, as he said:

"Well, my son, I came for you as soon as I could. Mother was so played out after the excitement that I took her back to the *Nautilus*. She is waiting for you. Where are your traps?"

The oarsman blinked at his father,

and sheepishly stammered: "D-darned if I wanted to see you or anybody else. But now you're here, it's sort of different. Pretty rotten, wasn't it?"

"Harvard did rub it into you, Jud, but you pulled a good oar. You were not well backed up in the waist of the boat, and your coaching was bad," was the cheery response. "Better let the post-mortems go till to-morrow. Life won't look so totally hopeless after a night's sleep."

The son stiffened a bit, and doggedly made answer:

"The coach wasn't to blame, and our style was all right. Rowing has changed a lot since you were here years ago."

With a good-natured shrug, Mr. Peyton Brooks slipped a hand through his son's arm, and said, as they turned toward the house:

"I won't start an argument, but we used to have a comfortable trick of beating Harvard four years out of five. Well, this old place hasn't changed very much. How I loved those last few weeks up here!"

"I haven't found much fun in it, dad. It was nothing but hard work, and more of it. Why didn't you run up and see me before the race? I got your telegram, but the *Nautilus* came in yesterday, and you were anchored in the harbor overnight."

"I had a notion that the old grads were rather in the way under this professional coaching system of yours, Jud. All business. No time for sentiment. Lord, but they used to come flocking back here, and how we youngsters looked up to them! There was a boating reunion at Gales Ferry every year."

Judson Brooks made no comment. His father had rowed in winning Yale crews away back in the dark ages, twenty-odd years ago. And although the exceedingly vigorous Mr. Peyton Brooks was only a trifle more than forty, in his son's eyes he was an elderly person, who belonged to a past generation. Whenever they had discussed rowing matters, young Judson assumed that tolerant, dutiful, yet wholly unconvinced attitude which is

characteristic of youth when offered the wisdom of its fathers.

In this hour of heart-breaking disappointment, Peyton Brooks was more disposed to comfort his boy than to thresh over boating theories. Soon they were moving down the river in the yacht's boat, and, as the half-mile flags of the racing course slid dimly past in the dusk, the son was living over again the nightmare of the struggle against Harvard. His father had very different visions and memories, of swinging down this river in Yale crews that took the lead and showed a swirling rudder to their rivals through one hard-fought mile after another.

"And so they have made you captain," said Peyton Brooks, coming back to the present. "It is a great honor, my boy. It used to be the biggest thing in Yale. If I hadn't quit college at the end of junior year, I should have been captain of the crew."

"I'll bet you would have made a bully good one," loyally quoth the son. "But I don't believe it amounts to so much now. The coach is the boss, you know."

Peyton Brooks impatiently tossed his cigar overboard and rapped out:

"Your professional coach be hanged! Pardon me, Jud, but you and I can't seem to help locking horns over this rowing proposition. I hate to see all the sentiment, and spirit, and tradition knocked out of Yale boating. Put your coach in his place next year. Don't be a dummy captain. There, I don't mean to ruffle you."

"Joe Conover is all right," stubbornly asserted young Brooks. "The college hasn't lost faith in him. And it is my duty to stand by the system."

"I suppose we old fogies had better quit airing our opinions."

"They are awfully interesting," politely yawned the son, "but just now I'd rather have mother tuck me in bed."

Their boat skimmed between a long lane of yachts, sail, and steam, and gasoline, the rigging festooned with electric lights, the decks gay with music, and talk, and laughter. One of the largest of them rode well out toward

the harbor mouth where the channel widened, and there was room for her to swing. The *Nautilus* was no fragile, fair-weather craft, built to coast from port to port. Long, and black, and powerful, she loomed amid this pleasure fleet like an ocean steamer. A hundred men were on her muster roll, and twice she had voyaged around the globe.

Her owner, Peyton Brooks, had increased the income of the large estate that was his by inheritance, and although not wholly retired from active affairs, he enjoyed much wholesome leisure as a sportsman, traveler, and gentleman of cultivated tastes. Wealth had spoiled neither him nor his hard-working, ambitious son, who showed not the slightest inclination to frolic his way through Yale.

As these two ascended the gangway of the *Nautilus*, a woman ran across the spacious deck and kissed the young oarsman, with both her arms tight about his neck. There was a sob in her voice as she told him:

"I had to come straight from the race and lie down, Judson. I don't think I can ever bear to see you row again. Mothers don't belong here. It was too cruel. Are you all worn out?"

"Not a bit of it. Fit as a fiddle," smiled Judson. "One crew had to lose. It was tough on you, and no mistake."

He escorted his prettily girlish mother to the after deck, with its inviting willow chairs, and the Brooks family sat down for an affectionate chat. By tacit consent, rowing was a topic tabooed for this night. They discussed the summer's plans. The *Nautilus* was to sail next morning for Bar Harbor, and thence to cruise as far as Newfoundland, after which they would return to the country place on Long Island. Judson seemed disinclined to ask his college friends to visit him. He preferred to dodge Yale-men, and the father knew how much he took to heart the ignominious defeat on the Thames.

Time heals all hurts, however, and before the end of the cruise young Brooks was again interested in Yale boating, and keenly impatient for the

autumn practice on New Haven harbor. His father listened to his plans with quiet deference and a twinkling eye. It was an odd situation. His son had the greatest respect for his opinions in matters of politics, business, art, literature, and sport at large. But what the father had known about eight-oared crews some twenty-odd years before was politely discarded as antiquated rubbish. Both men kept their tempers, for they were an admirable pair of comrades, while Mrs. Brooks listened with a bewildered air. Surely it could not be so vitally important that you got your hands away before you started your slide, or bucked over on the catch, whatever this jargon might mean.

Judson paced the deck with his hands in his pockets, and delivered himself of such earnest language as this:

"But you will have to admit, dad, that everything else improves as time goes on. Look at football. Your game was horribly crude, compared with the scientific strategy and team play of to-day. And a lot must have been learned about rowing. Harvard chucked her old-fashioned notions before we did. She hired a corker of a professional, and beat us to it. We haven't developed our new system yet."

"But we rowed as fast, my dear boy. I stroked the boat that made the record for the course. And it still stands."

"You had a flooded river and a hurricane behind you," was the retort. "And Harvard was experimenting with all sorts of styles in those days. She was easy to whip."

Peyton Brooks became serious, and his strong, handsome face reflected wistful fondness, as he said:

"We were all Yale men together, Jud. Nobody coached for hire. The old captains came back to hammer us into shape because they loved the college and they loved the crew. And back of it all was tradition, my boy. You don't know what it is. It helped win boat races. Your crew went to pieces this year. It was no fault of yours. But I never saw an old Yale crew quit before the finish. If the pace killed them, they kept on swinging after they were dead. It was

called Yale sand, but it was nothing more or less than the thing called sentiment."

Young Brooks flushed and winced, but one must be patient with one's own father.

"I always thought it was the Bob Steele stroke that won your races, dad. He seems to be a sort of mythical hero."

"The Bob Steele stroke, properly rowed, can whip anything you can turn out of Yale to-day," emphatically declared the parent. "I don't give a tinker's dam what your professional coach tells you. Bob Steele had forgotten more rowing than you and your system will ever learn."

Such interviews as these invariably resulted in a deadlock. When the cruise was ended, Peyton Brooks became busied with his pursuits on dry land by way of change, and ardently devoted himself to polo, tennis, and golf. He was a man who had preserved the fine physical edge of his youth, and was proud of his condition. Judson loafed, as a vacation from the grueling training season, or sailed his thirty-footer, and fell in love three separate times.

It was in August when Mrs. Brooks ventured to inquire of her amiable lord and master:

"What are the plans for the winter, Peyton? Shall you want to stay in the country as late as usual? And are we to open the New York house, or go roaming over the Seven Seas in the *Nautilus*?"

"Just as you like, Nellie; but I have thought of something else. How does this strike you? Supposing we rent a furnished house in New Haven for the winter. Jud has only two years more there, you know. It's a pleasant town, lots of nice people. It occurs to me that you'd like to see the boy oftener."

"Bless your heart, Peyton," warmly exclaimed Mrs. Brooks. "I should like nothing better in this whole wide world. I haven't dared suggest such a thing. I was afraid it might be stupid for you, and, perhaps, Judson would disapprove.

Will he mind? Of course, I should be careful not to bother him in any way. But boys are so queer. Parents are perfectly proper things to have, but they must be kept in the background."

"I have not consulted Judson," was the firm response. "Let him keep his rooms on the campus, and live his own life. That is what he wants. We shall always be glad to give him a square meal when he drops in. And we shall take particular pains to squelch the heinous impression that he is tied to your apron strings."

"You are doing this for me, Peyton," and her eyes shone. "How sweet of you! You must have seen how I pined for a sight of the blessed boy when we were in Japan last winter. I tried to be brave."

"You were, Nellie. This is a reward of virtue. What do you say? Shall I look for a house in New Haven?"

"Without consulting Judson?"

"Consult him if you like, but I am rash enough to defy the opinion of the captain of the Yale crew."

The young man in question took it calmly, and tried to conceal an air of martyrdom. Of course, he had the finest mother and father on earth, but he was perfectly capable of taking care of himself, and it might be all right to have them living in the same town if they could keep clear of fussing over him and mollycoddling him. In his position as a junior, and the most prominent man of his class, a fellow had to think of his dignity, and if parents were not tactful they might queer things with the best of intentions.

"As a Yale man myself, I know the ropes, in a way, so you must not worry too much," his father mildly suggested. "I didn't graduate, thanks to your adorable mother. When I found there was no living without her, I chucked up my senior year and married her. A rash example, which you are not to follow."

The devoted husband, who was willing to forego his roving habits in order to please Mrs. Brooks, betook himself to New Haven and was fortunate enough to find on Whitney Avenue a large and comfortable place,

which a manufacturer in financial difficulties was anxious to lease as it stood. Early in September the Brooks household, with a small army of servants, moved from Long Island. Young Judson was kind enough to tarry with them for several days, and then departed to the campus and his rooms in Vanderbilt Hall. To the chum who lived with him he explained:

"Mother thinks she is settled until next June, but ten to one dad will get tired of it, and put the yacht in commission after Christmas. It is really bully to have them around. They are the sensible kind, you know."

Mr. Peyton Brooks was a gentleman of an independent and whimsical mind, as he could well afford to be. Luckily he had a wife whose temperament was so agreeable that she had long since ceased to see anything absurd in whatever he wished to do. Therefore, when he announced that he proposed to have a talk with the president of the university, and told her his errand, she was surprised, but not seriously agitated.

"But what will Judson say?" she gently suggested.

"He has said a good many things to me which hurt my feelings, although he didn't intend it that way. He has inherited a streak of stubbornness from his father."

Mrs. Brooks smiled and sighed, and decided to await events. Her energetic husband straightway strode to the campus and received a friendly greeting from President Bradley, who said, as they sat in the private office:

"That is a fine boy of yours. The living image of you. It rather startles me when I catch a glimpse of him now and then. I fancy myself back in your undergraduate days, when you were taking my courses in economics. How well and young you look!"

"The boy thinks I am an old gentleman," and Peyton Brooks' eyes danced with mischief. "My business with you does not concern him at all. You may remember that I left college at the end of my junior year. I wish to finish my course and get my degree."

The president sat very straight in his

chair, and otherwise behaved like a man taken unawares.

"What do you mean, Mr. Brooks? Do I understand that you want to enter the senior class of the academic department? Are you joking?"

"I have leased a house in New Haven for that very purpose. Now, is it as foolish as it sounds? I am a sportsman and a capitalist, but my tastes are also bookish. As an unlicked cub of an undergraduate, did I appreciate you and the other brilliant teachers and lecturers, men of national renown, Wheelock in history, Seaforth and Clark in the classics, Geers and Howland in literature? They were casting pearls before swine. It would interest me tremendously to select certain courses for a year. I am old enough to get a lot out of them. And I want my degree. It is something money can't buy. I don't propose to have my son come it over me as a full-fledged alumnus."

The head of the university regarded this unconventional visitor with puzzled amusement.

"Can you pass the examinations for senior year, Mr. Brooks?"

"Like a shot. Bet you a hundred even that I climb in without a condition. I have been brushing up during the summer. Of course, I don't want to embarrass my son, but we shall be in different classes, and I really can't see why he should make a fuss about it."

Even the most scholarly of presidents must have an eye to the business administration of the university. It was distinctly promising that Peyton Brooks should show so keen an interest in his Alma Mater. As a student for a year, he would learn the needs of the institution—more dormitories, a new library building, better salaries for the faculty.

"It is most unusual," said the president. "In fact, the laws of the college have something to say about the married undergraduate as ineligible, but er—"

"But I didn't marry while I was in college, my dear man. And it's a poor rule that can't stand an exception."

"Perhaps you had better talk with the dean. The examinations begin to-mor-

row morning. I have an idea that you will make as cheerful and busy an undergraduate as the rest of them."

"Oh, I intend to keep out of trouble and steer clear of the sporty crowd. My boy will be the right sort of a pattern for me."

Next day Judson Brooks hurried to the Whitney Avenue mansion and found his parents at luncheon. He made a magnificent effort to be calm and respectful, but his self-control had never been so severely strained.

"What's this I hear?" he demanded, after kissing his mother. "A couple of fellows were passing off conditions in the examination hall this morning, and they saw dad scribbling away at a little table for dear life. They guyed me like the deuce about it—said he must be suffering from an acute attack of absent-mindedness, and thought he was young again."

"That sounds a bit fresh of you, Jud," easily replied his father. "You are a member of the junior class, I believe. As a senior, permit me to remind you that I expect to be treated with proper deference."

"Heavens and earth, dad, are you talking through your hat? Have you gone off your bean?"

"My hat and what you are pleased to term my bean needn't worry you, my boy. Your mother is pleased with my ambition to finish my education, aren't you, Nellie?"

"If it won't make Judson unhappy," murmured the doting Mrs. Brooks.

"I intend to study hard and not disgrace you, Jud," resumed Peyton Brooks. "And I may go in for athletics."

"But you can't try for the varsity teams," gasped the son. "Think of your age and your position."

"My age is not under discussion," was the pleasant rejoinder. "It doesn't seem so very long ago since I was stroking a Yale crew, and at forty-three a man in my condition has a lot left in him, you know."

"But I am captain and stroke of the Yale crew," lamentably declaimed Judson. "Do you mean to say that there

is a possibility of my own father coming out as a candidate for stroke? This is positively delirious. Mother, can't you talk him out of it?"

"I am sure he doesn't mean to interfere with you, Judson." But Mrs. Brooks' manner was not as confident as her words. She recalled the obstinate discussions between the older and the younger generations concerning different schools of rowing.

"But the rules forbid it," desperately cried Judson. "You have to be in college a year before you can be eligible for a varsity team."

"I was here for three years," said Peyton Brooks. "I merely dropped out of college for a while. I am as lawful an upper classman as you are."

Judson groaned and implored his mother to adjourn upstairs and talk it over with him. There was no reasoning with the insane and obdurate author of his being. Mr. Peyton Brooks glanced at a clock and hastened back to the examination hall to pass off a paper in English constitutional history.

Although the football field called most of the strong men to the bruising routine of practice through the autumn, rowing was not neglected. The class eights were on the water, and Captain Judson Brooks sifted out a small squad of promising varsity material. These he drilled in a pair-oared coaching boat, and put a crew together for a daily paddle on the river and harbor. Haunting him was the dread that his father might appear at the boathouse and demand to be tested as a candidate. He was the kindest of parents, but something had gone very wrong with his mental processes, and to oppose him any further might make him violent. But Peyton Brooks seemed to be contentedly employed in the recitation and lecture rooms, and the season was well into October before he developed more acute symptoms.

He had begun to make friends among his comrades of the senior class, and they were both amused and flattered by his attentions. They refused to take him seriously as an undergraduate, but the streak of unaffected boyishness in

him made him a congenial companion. The men for whom he showed a liking were those who had tried for the varsity crew in previous years, only to be discarded in the weeding-out process, beside several whom Captain Judson Brooks had already dropped from his squad. They came in all sizes, but it was worthy of note that there were no weaklings among them, and their weights ranged from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy-five pounds.

Mr. Brooks invited a dozen of them to dinner, and a very fine dinner it was, after which they sat and smoked in the library, and listened while he told them stories of the days when Yale victories were taken for granted. He banished the shadow of discouragement. It was like hearing a trumpet call. Later in the evening the host made certain explanations, at which they laughed a good deal, and swore to do whatever he might ask of them.

About this time it was discovered that a battalion of carpenters and plumbers had transformed an oysterman's shanty on the river bank into a boathouse, with dressing rooms and shower baths. On a certain afternoon the varsity eight of Captain Judson Brooks was passing that way, and the oars skittered idly over the water as the coxswain shouted to cease rowing. Curiosity gripped the men as they sat and stared. The stroke leaned over his oar handle and shaded his eyes with a tremulous hand. Out of this mysterious boathouse came marching, two and two, a squad of young men in blue jerseys who carried between them a new eight-oared shell. To be precise, there was seven young men, and the eighth, who held the outrigger of the stroke's seat, was Mr. Peyton Brooks.

Judson Brooks could bear the sight no longer. He savagely dug his blade into the river, and his men swung up behind him, nor did they pause until a bend of the stream hid the harrowing sight. The unruffled Mr. Brooks proceeded to embark his crew, counseling them in his fashion:

"I expect we'll roll and splash all

over creation, but please keep your nerve. I picked you out because you haven't rowed enough to be chained fast to any pernicious style. You haven't much to unlearn. Steady, now. Shove her off."

Peyton Brooks, at stroke, looked far from decrepit. A man who plays a slashing game of polo is apt to be neither fat nor soft. He had not sat in a shell for years, but it all came back to him, as he slid aft, with his body between his knees, and his oar gripped the water. Clean and hard he swung on the catch, and drove home the finish with a powerful thrust of the legs. His men picked it up raggedly, and the shell lurched to starboard and to port, but his voice steadied them, and they managed to shoot through the drawbridge and cover a mile or so on the placid harbor. Returning to the boathouse, Peyton Brooks put another man in at stroke and coached from a pair-oared tub.

Judson Brooks appeared at the Whitney Avenue house for dinner. His ruddy, active father was in a most cheerful frame of mind. To the son's plaintive questions he answered:

"I *did* consider your feelings, Jud. You didn't want me to try for your crew. I have organized a crew of my own. The exercise is bully. I can't sit around and go stale, you know."

"But what are you going to do with that preposterous crew of yours? What kind of an organization do you call it? It isn't a class or a club eight. It has no standing in the college."

"By Jove, you have hit it, Jud. It's a club. The Superannuated Rowing Club, popularly known as the Superannuates. We old chaps expect to get a lot of fun out of it.

Until the cold winds of November and the first floating ice, the Superannuates' eight was daily afloat, and the shell began to move between strokes, and the oars to throw less spray. Then the conscientious commander went to reckless expense in the cemented cellar of the Whitney Avenue mansion. One end was walled off, a connection made with the water main, and, behold, there

was a rowing tank. A wooden box, long and narrow, was rigged with eight sliding seats and outriggers, and, after a brief vacation, the faithful slaves began to tug, and churn, and perspire. Mrs. Brooks was greatly diverted, and after tea was served in the afternoon, she invited callers into the cellar to watch her husband stroke his crew.

In February he announced to her that the small room behind the library was to be used by his men for their training table. They would need a waiter, and unlimited chops, steaks, potatoes, fruit, and oatmeal. It pleased her to have young men in the house, but she did wish Judson would forgive his father. Their relations were polite, but scarcely intimate. Judson was as dear and devoted to her as could be, and she rejoiced every day that she could have this year with him, but it was trying for him to consider his father as mad as a March hare.

The Superannuated Rowing Club found solid enjoyment in its training table, and the rest of the college called them lucky dogs to be living on the fat of the land in one of the finest houses of New Haven. When spring came, the tank in the cellar was abandoned, and this wholly superfluous eight went back to the river. The winter campaign had made them hard, and strong, and long-winded. Peyton Brooks looked fit to win a wrestling championship, and he yearned to try a few falls with his son, but decided to run no risks of spraining an ankle of the stroke oar and captain of the university eight.

It was about a fortnight before the migration to New London and the final weeks of the training season that the two crews slipped along side by side on the stretch of harbor between the drawbridge and Long Wharf. Judson Brooks had purposely avoided his father's eight, being sensitive to the jests of his comrades. On this day Peyton Brooks had followed the varsity with deliberate intent. The Superannuates no longer rolled and splashed. Their watermanship was confident and delicate, they swung as one man, and when their power was applied the shell

jumped with a stride that meant speed, unchecked and continuous. And, more than this, they had something which is difficult to explain. It does not come to every good crew. It is rather mental than physical, a harmony like that of the ship that found itself, the spirit of the crew fusing all the separate effort into a whole.

These young men, discarded material, were not great athletes. But day after day, month after month, they had heard from Peyton Brooks the tales of crews that were unbeatable, that were fired by splendid traditions, that expected to win because they knew nothing else. His personality mastered them.

As the two crews lay side by side, Peyton Brooks called out to his son:

"We are going out to the red buoy. Want to practice starts with us?"

"We shall take it in one stretch, thank you," grimly returned the youngster. "I don't care to stop and wait for you to come up."

"One stretch, Jud? Three miles? I think we'll join you. All ready, Superannuates. Let her go, coxswain."

The coaching launch was steaming a little in the rear of the varsity eight, old Joe Conover perched upon the bow, bawling instructions through a megaphone. Judson Brooks was to set the stroke at thirty, and keep it low. This wasn't a race. It was a joke. He must pay no attention to the other crew.

The two shells shot away with the quick, lunging strokes of the racing start. The varsity was the more expert at this, and jumped a length ahead. Then Judson dropped to the steady, deliberate gait of thirty to the minute. From the corner of his eye he watched his father, who was driving his men with flawless rhythm and well-contained effort. He had never seen this middle-aged parent extend himself before. The boy's heart beat faster with natural pride. By George, the old man could row; and talk about form! But Judson had to keep his eyes in the boat, and attend to his own business. His coxswain sang out that the other crew was actually picking up that lost length.

Judson grinned, and still held the

stroke at thirty, but he put more steam into it, and his men responded to the quickening impulse. And still the Superannuates came creeping up an inch at a time, while the varsity coxswain bawled disgustedly:

"Oh, you left-footed lobsters, you're all asleep. Heave all. Give her ten good strokes and run away from those merry jests."

And still Peyton Brooks' crew hung on the quarter of the varsity boat, and could not be shaken off. It was absurd, impossible, but there was no getting away from the fact. And now the father of Judson shoved his own stroke up a notch, and his seven comrades followed him as does a symphony orchestra when the leader waves his baton. The Superannuates forged ahead and were on even terms. And there they stayed until the race, for it was a race in dead earnest, surged into the second mile.

Now Judson Brooks threw instructions to the winds. He didn't propose to keep his stroke down to thirty, and have his father laugh at him. He raised it to a full thirty-two. Peyton Brooks uttered a stentorian war whoop and accepted the challenge. Up, up he set his stroke; faster, faster moved the shell. It slowly drew ahead of the varsity. With no signs of distress, and never a break in the line of men, the Superannuates spurted once, twice, thrice, and a mile from the red buoy they had hammered out a clean length of lead.

Judson Brooks was rowing his very heart out, and his men had begun to tire. Old Joe Conover was dancing on the forward deck of the launch, smashing his megaphone against a stanchion, shouting frenzied exhortations.

Two lengths ahead, the Superannuates slid past the red buoy and let their oars trail. Peyton Brooks looked fresh enough to have given his son a worse drubbing.

Judson never glanced at him, but turned to look back at his scowling men and growled:

"You've disgraced yourselves. Now we'll turn around and row home."

They paddled in the direction of the

drawbridge, the victors loafing along behind them. Peyton Brooks, that thoroughbred sportsman, felt sharp twinges of sorrow and remorse. He had not expected a result so decisive, but once in a hammer-and-tongs contest, he was not one to quit. And he had inflicted upon his son a very cruel humiliation. He was rather poor company in the boathouse, and dreaded facing Mrs. Brooks with this tragic story. His chauffeur had been ordered to call for him, and while waiting he was both pleased and dismayed to see his son approach from the street which led past the varsity boathouse.

"I wanted to have a talk before you went home, dad," blurted Judson.

"Bully for you, Jud. Have dinner with us, won't you? We serve training-table fare, you know. About this afternoon. I ought not to have done it."

The boy brushed a hand across his eyes. His voice was husky as he said:

"It was hell for me. You whipped us, and, worse than that, you can do it again. It was no fluke. You have the better crew. Do you know what that means?"

"It means that I have tried out my rowing theories against yours, Jud. That is why I have spent the year in New Haven."

"But what about me, dad? I can't take my men to New London to row Harvard after this. Which is the varsity crew? And you can't take that eight of yours. It may be all right for you to play around here, but you can't expect Harvard to accept you as stroke and captain of the Yale boat. It wouldn't be good sportsmanship."

"I know all that, my son. So you think your old has-been of a father can teach you something about rowing? Is the Bob Steele stroke out of date? Does your professional know it all? I am putting it up to you good and hard, Jud. We'll have the disagreeable part of it over as soon as possible. I want to see Yale win. I want to see her proud of her traditions, and unwilling to let them die. But more than all this, I want you to be happy."

"You took a queer way to make me

happy, dad. This Harvard race means everything in the world to me. I have done my best, as you know, and here I am with a slower crew than yours on my hands. And the fastest crew that can be turned out ought to row for Yale."

"Which is what I intended all the time," cried Peyton Brooks. "I am through rowing. My work as a stroke oar is finished. To-morrow I want you to take my crew. And you will sit in my place. I shall be delighted to coach you and go to New London. You have a month in which to change your style to mine. It would be a terribly risky experiment with most men. But you can do it. I can show you how. You are a natural oarsman, and, I speak with becoming modesty, you may have inherited it."

"But can I get the swing and keep your men together?" The boy spoke it almost like a prayer.

"Those lads of mine? Bless you, they can't help pulling together. They don't know anything else. You couldn't throw them out of their stride. You and I will spend a lot of time in the pair-oared tub. I guarantee to polish you off so that Bob Steele himself couldn't tell the difference between us across the river."

Judson looked less troubled, but his brows were still knitted as he exclaimed:

"But what the deuce will the college say? This means that I must chuck out seven varsity men a month before the race. It is a regular revolution. Nothing like it was ever heard of!"

"Have you heard of Yale winning a boat race since you came to college?" sweetly inquired his father. "Perhaps it is time for a revolution, Jud."

"And there is Joe Conover. He is under contract as head coach."

"You are the captain of the Yale crew, my son. Joe Conover knows the jig is up. He is wise enough to size up that crew of mine. And Yale is bigger than Joe Conover."

"And so you joined the senior class and made a sort of cheerful guy of

yourself for this," was the wondering comment of Judson Brooks.

"Oh, I have enjoyed brushing up my intellect. But you have guessed the answer. I couldn't turn the trick any other way. Here comes my car. Let's go and tell your mother about it."

Two days before the crew went to New London, the president of the university chanced to meet on the campus that capable member of the senior class, Peyton Brooks.

"I hear we have a great crew, thanks to you," said the president.

"Thanks mostly to my son," corrected the father of Judson. "Do I get my diploma at commencement?"

"Your scholarship and deportment have been reported to me as excellent, sir. You will be graduated with honors."

"Will two hundred thousand for a new dormitory make you feel glad that I turned boy again?"

"You are cordially invited to take a postgraduate course at the same terms, Mr. Brooks."

To the Yale quarters at Gales Ferry came homing back, like kings from exile, the oarsmen of other days, some of them grizzled and portly. They belonged to the Bob Steele dynasty, and they filled the place with jovial loyalty and reminiscenses to make the blood tingle. Joe Conover retired into the background, abdicating with good grace. A peaceful uprising had dethroned him. The real head coach was Peyton Brooks, unreconstructed, swearing by tradition, on the river all day in the blazing sun, and spending half the night in the boathouse to rig the racing shell according to the measurements, formulæ, and specifications, sacred and inviolate, of his school of rowing.

He saw the race from the deck of the stately *Nautilus*, which was swung abreast of the course a little below the three-mile flag. His guests were a score of rowing men of bygone vintages. As they gazed up the gleaming river the starting gun boomed and echoed from the wooded shores. Mrs. Brooks slipped her hand in her husband's, and

nestled close to his side. He was outwardly the more nervous of the two.

"Supposing I have been all wrong, Nellie," he groaned. "The boy may have been right, after all. Perhaps we are out of date, and Harvard rows better than she used to."

"Anyhow, your intentions were beautiful, Peyton. But if I have to see Judson beaten again I shall die, absolutely and finally die."

"It was awfully risky, trying to clip his style and change it here and there, and make him fit in with those boys of mine," pursued the panicky sportsman. "If it turns out to be a brute of a race, he may tire and go back to his old style, and then the whole boat will be knocked galley-west. There is no fool like an old fool, Nellie."

"Oh, go below and talk to yourself," shouted the rosy-gilled Number Five of the crew of 1887. "You're croaking like a sick chicken."

"His one chick is stroking the Yale boat," spoke up Mrs. Brooks. "How would you feel?"

"Mine are all girls, thank you."

"I wish mine were, just now," sighed Peyton Brooks.

They saw two specks side by side, and the flash of oars like winking bits of mirrors, too far distant to be distinguishable. Peyton Brooks sat down abruptly. His legs had failed him. Yale had the east side of the river. Nearer, nearer came the race. And still the two crews seemed to be racing side by side.

"Nip and tuck," muttered Peyton Brooks. "Pulling their souls out. Can Yale take her punishment?"

Soon they were certain that at the end of the first two miles Yale and Harvard were rowing a dead heat. Another mile, and the struggle would pass the flag near which Yale had gone to pieces the year before. And now Peyton Brooks dared not pick up his binoculars and look at his son. He closed his eyes, gulped, opened them again, and heard one of his guests yell:

"The old stuff, Peyton! Our kind of a crew! And is that boy of yours soaking it to 'em? Well, I guess."

The father pulled himself together and stared at the crew, his own crew that he had assembled, and molded, and inspired. Eight backs in perfect unison, a long, slow slide, a viciously hard catch, a tremendous heave of the shoulders, the quick leg drive, bodies erect at the finish, hands shooting out like lightning for the careful recover! Judson Brooks was doing all these things as his father had taught him. And from his seat all the way to the bow there was coöperation, harmony, and indomitable power.

It was a splendid Harvard eight that fought them, but the Crimson had met its match this day. The verdict hung in the balance until the last half mile. And then Judson Brooks raised the stroke. There was no faltering behind him. He felt no back-breaking weight and drag. They were with him, every man taking his share of the burden. And in the back of their heads was a last ounce of unused effort. Perhaps in these final moments of supreme en-

deavor the traditions that had been made to live again braced them with the conviction that Yale could not possibly be whipped. And they lifted the straining shell across the finish line a length and a half ahead of plucky Harvard.

After supper at the Yale quarters that night, Judson Brooks was elected captain for another year. The proceedings were neither brief nor gloomy. Peyton Brooks had carried a boat-load of his guests up the river, and they held a war dance on the lawn. They also constituted themselves a governing committee of Yale rowing affairs, with power to select a head coach. It was unanimously voted that Peyton Brooks be compelled to serve until further notice, without pay.

"You won't have to force me," said he, standing beside his son. "But I must first consult the captain. Do you approve, Jud?"

"Sure thing, dad. You have made good. And I have decided that a man isn't so awfully old at forty-three."



MAYNARD AND THE MUSIC BOX

HARRY MAYNARD used to be a member of the House of Representatives until the voters of his district laid him prostrate on the ground, and put upon his recumbent form the marks of many iron boots, thus effectively retiring him to private life. The last time he was in the national capital he was explaining in a jocular manner that an extra session of Congress would not be necessary.

Congress reminded him, he said, of a pianola of which he had heard. A man was preparing to go on his vacation, and was unfolding his plans to his neighbor in the next apartment.

"We will be gone a long time," he said, "and we are thinking about taking our pianola with us."

"I would," replied the neighbor. "The Lord knows it needs a vacation."



NEW COMMENT ON THE FASHIONS

HIS name was John Smith, as is always the case with men about whom stories are told without mentioning their names, and he had spent his verdant youth in the country. One evening he found himself at a ball in a large city. His eyes took unto themselves the size of butter plates, and his jaw sagged as might be the case with one who had died but had not received the benefit of a visit from the undertaker. The women in their décolleté gowns transfixed him. At last he turned to the friend who had brought him to the ball, and remarked explosively:

"Gee, I see these girls have on their now-and-thens!"

Elder Brother

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Hidden Water," "Pecos Dalhart, Rustler," Etc.

It is a strange name to give a snake—Elder Brother. You will understand the significance when you have read about this huge specimen of the wriggly family which was the chief attraction of a curio store in a raw Western town

IN the old days, when San Juan de Luz was a raw Western town, and the tourists just beginning to come, Otto Jungck set up his curio store on Main Street. There are several of them there now, and business is unbelievably brisk, but Otto is not there to enjoy it. He had his taste of it—just one merry winter, with profits at five hundred per cent—and then he stepped on Elder Brother, and went where the profits are less.

It was a very curious store that Otto had, with a wide door, so that all might look in. In the front windows he had bows and arrows and Indian baskets, a butcher knife that had belonged to Geronimo, three blond scalps on a pole, and other interesting relics interspersed with swastika jewelry and Navaho blankets. Every one who came to town looked into those windows at least once, and there was always a bunch of reservation Indians loitering near who could be depended upon to gaze for hours.

If they had baskets in their handkerchiefs Otto would indulge them, for he was always keen for a trade—otherwise he ordered them away, and scowled at their nose marks on his window. He was a little man, with thick glasses and a crabbed manner, and the Indians did not like him. They had a name for him—a very bad name—all their own; but when the sun hung low and the town marshal began to glare—if there were no tourists to buy and the butcher would not trade for meat—then very

reluctantly they came back and sold their baskets to Jungck. It was the law that all Indians must quit the town by sundown, and rather than go home empty-handed they sold their baskets to him.

He had none of the graces of other traders—there was no *pilon* or goodwill offering to console them for the low price; no stick of candy or a jew's-harp; no time even, to let them haggle and beg—but if they held up two fingers he held up one, or crossed it and made it a half. And never would he raise his bid, not so much as a nickel's worth—so the women did not show him their poor fingers all blistered and sore from the hard weaving, nor point to the difficult pattern and the regularity of the coils, but either laid down their baskets sulkily or turned and took them away.

It was only when tourists came into the store that Otto Jungck was pleasant, and then he was the soul of hospitality, pointing out the symbolism of all the patterns, showing them old baskets and blankets that were not for sale, and keeping them so long with his stories that many were impelled to buy from shame. Yet if they did not he was as genial as ever, following them to the door with nods and smiles and invitations to come again. He was a good salesman, Otto Jungck, and anything that would bring people to his shop he welcomed—for when people come they buy.

Now, the season at San Juan de Luz begins in the month of October, when

the cold weather sets in back East, and drives people with tender lungs to Arizona. All through the summer San Juan is hot, so hot that the dogs grow gaunt and the flies dry up and die; but in October the days are splendid—warm and clear, yet with a cool breeze in the afternoon and an air so clean and aromatic that it goes to the head like wine. It is then that the tourists come—the pleasure-seekers, the invalids, and all their friends and kin—and it was then that Otto Jungck spread out his wares. And to lure them in he set out a glass case of torpid horned toads, a cage of Gila monsters, and a box of sickly rattlesnakes just by the door.

For the tourist, no trip to Arizona would be complete without at least a look at a rattlesnake, and yet, though the days seemed so warm, there were none to be found in the land. October was cold—for snakes—so Otto had all there were above ground. And the people came and gazed in upon them, and shuddered agreeably, and wandered in to buy; but they were few to those that followed when Gor-go-nees brought in his big snake.

Gor-go-nees was a medicine man among the Indians, greatly feared but not highly paid, and one day as winter came on and his belly cried out for food he came into town with his snake. He alone of all the Indians dared to lay his hand on a rattlesnake, either to capture or to kill, and now, while a band of them followed behind him with scared eyes and guttural outcries, he walked boldly down the street with death's messenger in a sack. It was a gunny sack, old, and pierced with many holes, and as he swung it carelessly over his shoulder the writhing coils of the monster showed plainly through the mesh; yet Gor-go-nees bore it proudly, never flinching, with a smile on his masklike face. At sight of him a crowd of Mexicans and other loiterers fell in behind the Indians; storekeepers, tourists, even bronzed desert men and cowboys turned suddenly as they saw the sack; and when Gor-go-nees set it down upon the floor, Jungck's shop was crammed like an auction sale.

A peep into the depths of the sack, and the trader saw the reason—never had such a big snake been seen in San Juan de Luz, either alive or dead, and this one was alive and singing. The locustlike buzzing of his rattles pervaded every corner of the store, and as he lay there coiled for striking his great body seemed to swell with rage. He was fairly terrible to look at, a mass of diamond-backed coils, ringed with black and white at the tail and tipped with jet where he darted his forked tongue. And beneath his horny eyebrows and the swell of his venomous head his glazed eyes glowed and sparkled like fire opals in the sun. Yes, he was truly horrible, and Jungck stepped back quickly, but he did not lose his head—the Indian had brought him to sell!

"How much?" he demanded, shooing the boys away from his show case and screwing his mouth down to drive a trade. "*Cuanto?*"

The medicine man gazed at him grimly, his hypnotic black eyes full of a leering mastery, and then he threw out his right hand with all the fingers spread.

"Five dollars?" cried the curio man incredulously. "No!" And he raised a single finger.

"*Cinco pesos!*" persisted Gor-go-nees, as the crowd burst into a jeer.

"Yes—or a hundred," chimed in a voice from behind. "That snake is six foot long."

"*Uno peso!*" rasped the curio man, still holding up his skinny finger.

"Look, this *vivora* is big!" protested Gor-go-nees, and, wetting his fingers, he caught it quickly by the neck and drew it out of the sack.

"Look, it has many rattles," he said, and held out the twisting tail.

Then when he saw that all was useless, he breathed upon it soothingly, and thrust it back into the sack. Four fingers he flashed, and three, and two—then he took the single dollar, and went grimly on his way. His deep-lined face still wore its masklike smile, but his eyes had lost their leering, and were fixed in a boding stare. He bought his meat at the butcher shop, a quarter's

worth at a time, and a little coffee and flour, and then while the crowd still watched him he walked gloomily out of town.

The next week was a record breaker at Otto Jungck's curio store. Two and three times a day great parties would come down from the hotel to gaze, and at each tap on the glass the snake would arch his neck and tighten up his monstrous coils until even the men stepped back. Oh, it was magnificent! And when Otto showed them the snake design in Indian blankets and basketry, when he told the tale of Gor-go-nees, exiled from his tribe in the north, where the rattlesnake is worshiped as a god and lording it at San Juan de Luz where the Indians feared them like death—then there was a lively traffic in snake skins, and baskets, and diamond-patterned rugs.

But when Gor-go-nees returned with a nestful of desert chipmunks he did not share in the profits. Perhaps it was that his manner was overweening, or perhaps Otto was jealous and afraid he would demand a reward. Be that as it may, he received him coldly, and stared shrewdly at the crowd.

"Well, what you want?" he demanded, as the medicine man stood silent, and Gor-go-nees showed his bag of chipmunks.

"Big snake," he said, pointing at the cage, "he eat."

"Umph-umm!" dissented Jungck, shaking his head, "snake cold—no eat."

"Big snake eat!" reiterated Gor-go-nees, and going over to the glass case he stooped and smiled in at his pet.

"My brother," he said, nodding gravely at the snake, "he eat. You give me two bits!"

"No, hombre," answered Jungck, with a resentful snarl; "I give you nothing!"

"Ten cents!" suggested Gor-go-nees, but before he could be denied a sun-brown man handed him a quarter and told him to go ahead.

"Good!" observed Gor-go-nees, glancing at the coin, and unhooking the shakley latch he opened the top of the

cage. Then, wetting his fingers, and making slow motions with his left, he reached in suddenly, and grabbed the snake with his right. If he depended upon magic for his safety he nevertheless took no chances on getting bit, for his hand moved like a flash, and he seized his brother snake by the neck; but once caught he breathed soothingly upon its head, muttering low words in his Indian tongue, and stroking the crooks from its body. Then he deposited the young chipmunks in the corner of the cage, pressed the snake down on the bottom, and twitched his hands away.

"You afraid?" questioned the sun-brown man, but Gor-go-nees only smiled his deep-lined smile.

"'Fraid no!" he said. "Snake bite?" He pecked his hand with two fingers. "All right!" And he gravely wet his fingers and rubbed them over the spot to indicate a cure.

He was a short, black, little man, dressed principally in a red undershirt and a pair of overalls, but as he stood up and faced the crowd a sense of his mastery came over them, and nobody ventured a smile. His deep-set, hypnotic eyes swept the circle of awed onlookers, and came back again to the snake.

"My brother," he said, tapping on the glass, and as he started for the door they opened a passage before him. Then the people came back again to gaze at the monster rattlesnake, and Otto Jungck sold them jewelry and blankets.

The fame of the curio rattlesnake spread, and many men came on purpose to see it, but Gor-go-nees came no more. The nestful of young chipmunks vanished, and the snake grew restless in his cage, but as winter came on and chilled his blood he lay motionless, with lackluster eyes. Then one day in the month of January a strange man came to town—a big, lusty man with a brown beard—and he greeted all the Indians as "Brother," which made them laugh. He wore leggings on the streets, where there was no brush, and talked a great deal of the Hopis and the Indians of

the north, and of their snake dance to take place in August. The Hopis, too, were his brothers—sworn brothers, and eager to share their lore—but to win a place in their councils he wished to bring medicine in return. So now his heart was set on a remedy for snake poison, to cure them when they were bit, and every day when he came by he looked in at the big snake and made friends with Otto Jungck.

He was a powerful man, and well versed in Indian lore, but when he first spoke of his purpose the curio man shook his head. But the bearded man held fast, bringing many people down from the hotel and helping in other ways, until at last he won his point. He needed the virus of a rattlesnake in order to devise a cure, and, since all the wild snakes were holed up for winter, he planned to extract the venom from Elder Brother. That, it seemed, was the Hopi name for the rattlesnake, for he was their brother in olden times, and bore their prayers for rain to the distant Hopi gods. So to the big man he was Elder Brother also, and he spoke to him by that title as he lifted him out of the cage.

It was cold, and Elder Brother was sluggish and slow to anger when they forked his neck with a stick—but when the big man dragged him forth and pried open his jaws with a wedge he struggled and shook his head. Elder Brother was strong, but the bearded man was stronger; he held him close by his swelling neck with a fist against his square jowls, and Elder Brother struggled in vain—for a time.

But now, as Otto Jungck fluttered around and a few horror-stricken onlookers stood aghast, the monster came suddenly to his strength. Shaken and baited to make him spit forth his venom his anger found vent in savage hisses. He writhed and twisted, throwing out loops and coils and trying to draw back his head; then suddenly, as the big man held a covered glass before him he wrenched loose his long, limber tail and wrapped it quickly around his arm. Still confident in his great strength, the man delayed to unfasten him; the coil

clamped tighter, and the tail slipped up and beat his cheek; then, as he dropped his glass and seized the encircling bands, the powerful body contracted and gripped his arm like a vise.

Clutch as he would, he could not break its hold, and the tail lapped around his neck. Then a panic seized him, and as he tore frantically at the iron coils with his left hand the strength oozed out of his right. Slowly, as the great snake squeezed it, he felt his arm grow numb; his grip on the broad head weakened; and then, in an awful moment, he felt it slip, and the sting of the venomous fangs.

There were other awful moments that followed—such as sometimes come to men who play with death—and then the big man ran out for a doctor while others rushed in to kill the snake. But there the warped nature of Otto Jungck asserted itself—for the love of money possessed him—and he stood between them and his snake. It was his snake—he had bought it—the big man had handled it at his own risk. So he cried out, pacing up and down before the pile of boxes behind which Elder Brother had hauled his length; and when he had made them see reason he locked the doors and sent for Gor-go-nees.

The medicine man came, never hurrying, never faltering, and when he heard the story he named a price. It was a good price, greater than he had received for the snake, and when the curio man had placed it in his hand he cleared away the boxes and took his stand before the rattlesnake. Very patiently he soothed its ugly temper, brushing it across the head with a snake priest's plume of feathers, and when at last Elder Brother unwound his coils and crawled across the floor, he swept him up by the middle and whisked him into his cage. Then he put in a saucer of milk, made fast the latch, and went grimly on his way.

The big man who had been snake bit did not die, for the doctors had a cure of their own, but he lost his first interest in snakes. Shortly afterward he left town with his arm in a sling, and the populace flocked back to the store.

Meanwhile a violent controversy had arisen in San Juan de Luz, some claiming that Elder Brother should be killed, others that the big man deserved his fate—but both sides went to see the snake. His opalesque eyes took on a sinister light now, and the muscles of his back that stood out when he crawled spoke eloquently of his strength. There were men who claimed that he could even break the glass or pry open the close-latched top, but Otto Jungck did not listen to them, for business was brisk—so brisk that he hired a lunger for a clerk.

A month went by, and the first warm days came, and as the soft air thawed him out the monster snake became restless. Perhaps it was hunger which impelled him, for Gor-go-nees came no more to feed him milk, or perhaps the prompting of spring; but he crawled anxiously to and fro, rising up to thrust his head against the cover, or feeling along the glass with his blue-black, forked tongue.

And then one night an awful accident happened—as the clerk returned in the evening and groped about for the light he trampled upon the snake, which dealt him death at a single blow. The doctors worked desperately to save him, but the wound was too deep, and his body too frail for the shock. So, a short while before his time, the poor lunger passed away, and San Juan de Luz went mad.

No one knew how Elder Brother had escaped his cage. His latch was fastened as before; the glass was all intact; and yet by some devilish art he had writhed forth from the case and stretched sprawling across the floor. But if opinion differed as to his escape, there was unanimity in this—that the great snake ought to be killed. And yet Otto Jungck held off. He did not deny that the snake was dangerous; he did not dispute as to its ultimate fate; and yet while the crowd was clamoring he sent off for Gor-go-nees.

It was the day of the funeral, after many messengers had besought him in vain, that Gor-go-nees finally came, marching in very grimly with his hair

down over his eyes. For two days the store had been closed to wait his coming, though there was crape upon the door. Other men were eager to enter, but Jungck knew they would kill the snake, so he waited for Gor-go-nees. There had been a time when the snake priest had held up five fingers and the curio man had held up one; now the medicine man showed all his fingers, and stood calm while Otto raved, yet when the battle was over he still opened his two black hands.

“Ten dollars!” he grunted, flashing out his hands. Then, as the curio man still haggled, he spoke suddenly and cut him off.

“You give me snake,” he said. “All right—I catch.” He made a motion as of speedy seizure, and waited for a reply.

“My brother!” he added, waving a hand at the boxes and bales, but Otto Jungck did not accede. For a moment he frowned at the crowd by the doorway, who broke in with their meddlesome cries, and then he drew out his purse.

“*Muy bien*,” he said. “You catch my snake.” And he gave him ten dollars in gold.

“Good!” grunted Gor-go-nees, glancing down at the gold, and tying it up in his handkerchief he crept softly into the store. Stooping and peering, he moved in and out among the boxes and bales; and then suddenly the air was vibrant with the whir of rattles, and the crowd by the door surged back. Elder Brother was found, but his spirit was evil, and he struck viciously at the plumed feathers—but Gor-go-nees was patient, and in time he broke his coil. Then, as the great snake writhed away he caught him by the middle, distracting his gaze by artful dabs of the turkey plumes; and while he buzzed and arched his neck the medicine man bore him swiftly and clapped him into his cage.

“Cage bad!” he observed, as he lifted it back to its pedestal; and, prying up the locked lid, he squeezed a finger into the crack.

"Ah, go on!" mocked the curio man, shoving him aside, and while the big snake lay motionless in its case he drove the idlers out. Only those who came to buy could gaze on the rattlesnake now, otherwise his store would be crowded to no purpose and good customers turned away. The season was at its height now, with the warm weather just coming on, and many fine ladies and gentlemen came over to look at the snake. They marveled at Otto Jungck's courage, that he should sleep in the same room with the snake, but to every one he returned the same answer—the cage was perfectly safe.

And was it true, they asked, that his clerk had been killed by the snake?

"Unfortunately—yes," he answered. "But the clerk was a trifle careless; he had neglected to fasten the cage."

So he spoke to all, until he believed it, and his mind became a blank to everything but the business that was in hand. The rich people bought, many of them magnificently, and his place was much talked of in town. Some said he was foolish, and that the snake would bite him, but others claimed that he put weights on the cage at night, and that his day talk was simply bravado. Many there were who begged him to kill the snake before it should do him some harm, but all fear of that had passed out of his mind, and he only smiled at their innocence.

For a man in his line of business the big rattlesnake was worth thousands of dollars. It drew a new class of customers, the very rich, who otherwise might never come. And the very rich traveled fast and far; they associated with others of their kind, and told them of the monstrous snake. They greeted him almost like an old acquaintance when they came in, and often they told of their friends, the So-and-sos, who had directed them to his place. Even the ordinary citizens of San Juan de Luz began to speak of him proudly, as an odd genius but well worth the see-

ing, for he actually brought people to town.

There were those so rich and idle that they came just to see his snake, and he put a big advertisement, nicely worded, in the papers that such people read. His cards, with a picture of the monster snake on them, went broadcast throughout the land, and his mail orders grew apace. Only one thing held down his profits—he could not hire a clerk. Many applicants came to his store, but they looked about nervously, glancing often at the floor, and starting at sudden noises, and no one would come in at night. No matter how brilliantly he lighted his windows the corners were dark and mysterious, and they remembered the fate of the clerk.

So, toiling early and late, Otto gathered in his golden harvest, doing all the work himself, and gloating over the money at night. Early in the evening he retired to the back room, where he slept on a cot to guard his stock, and in the morning he rose up with the street sweepers to get his day's work done. And the profits were enormous—from three hundred to five hundred per cent.

But one morning, when the season was still on, and there were many orders yet to fill, Otto Jungck did not open his doors. Eight o'clock came, and nine, and then they forced them in. The cicadalike whir of rattles was the only answer to their knocks, and so they guessed the worst. They found him huddled up on the counter, his eyes staring wide as if to see in the dark; and on the floor beneath him lay Elder Brother, his bruised tail drawn close within his coils, his head erect, and the lust of battle still in his eyes. So they killed him, fighting savagely to the end, and stretched his mangled body on the sidewalk where every one could see. And after all the rest had made their comments Gor-go-nees gazed upon him fondly, his grim face wrinkled to a smile, and murmured:

"My brother!"

The Murder of Jack Robinson

By Howard Fielding

Author of "Larry the Listener," "Bill Harris—His Line," Etc.

For the man with an analytical turn of mind we know of nothing more stimulating than a story by Howard Fielding. His mysteries are real mysteries, and bright indeed is the reader who solves the problems before the final curtain. Here you have a number of tangled ends: a lovely girl run down by an automobile, refusing to give her name; a nurse in the hospital who disclaims any knowledge of the patient, and yet whose presence distresses the girl; then the finding of the murdered Jack Robinson, with his last breath murmuring the name of a man known to the hospital nurse. Tangled ends—but they are only the beginning of the mystery, as strange a one as Fielding has ever conceived.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is an old saying about the advisability of doing as the Romans do when you're in Rome.

What penalty, if any, was supposed to follow an infraction of that rule I have forgotten; but I know that a similar offense in New-York to-day is likely to be punished with death.

For example, about five o'clock of an afternoon in June—June 7th, to be precise in the matter—a woman stepped from the curb at Fifty-fifth Street and Broadway with the intention of taking a cab whose driver had exchanged signals with her from the other side. It would have been more usual to wait for the cab to cross, but that is unimportant. Nobody cared why the woman crossed the street, so long as she did it in the proper way, keeping step with the devil's jig that was going on around her. She did not; she stopped suddenly, and turned back toward the spot from which she had come. New Yorkers do not do this—surely not at that place. Some, indeed, have attempted it, but they are no longer with us.

The usual stream of automobiles was

whirling by; one, perhaps two, of the chauffeurs took note of the woman when she started across, and assumed from her appearance, which may be described as expensive, that she knew how to take care of herself. Her life depended upon the accuracy of this assumption, of course, but so did the lives of thousands whom the chauffeurs skimmed past, with broad inches to spare, every day and all day long. This woman, however, did the unexpected thing—a practice now prohibited; moreover, she was the less able to save herself because of a rather heavy veil which covered the upper part of her face. She stepped directly in front of an automobile, and the next instant was flung to the pavement, whereon she rolled like a bag of meal, and then lay still.

Voices cried out to carry her into a druggist's shop near by; but a patrolman and a member of the traffic squad from the Fifty-third Street corner were more happily inspired, and they bore her along Fifty-fifth Street to the Lawrence Hospital. It was an unusual procedure, for the Lawrence is not supposed to take accident cases; but the

two officers shrewdly judged that this particular case would be welcome anywhere.

At the hospital a doctor viewed the patient, and decided to call in the attending surgeon if he could find him.

He looked around for some one who could help him to put this idea into execution, and saw a nurse in street dress beyond the open door. She had been out, and had returned just as the case was brought in. The doctor approached her that he might speak more privately, and as he happened to be one of those men who understand clothes he noticed the elegant simplicity of her new gown. It was as plain as a single fold of classic drapery, and as effective, and he wondered how she could afford to employ the artist who must have made it.

"Miss Perry," said he, with deference, for she was not only a very beautiful and superior girl, but one whose influence in the institution was supposed to be strong, "will you telephone for Doctor Warren? I think he'd like to see this case."

"Is it serious?" she asked.

"I don't know."

She glanced beyond him at the patient.

"Oh!" said she. "Yes, I'll attend to it."

Doctor Warren was not at his office, or at the Athletic Club, but when Miss Perry called up the garage on Fifty-fourth Street where he kept his automobile she was more fortunate. Warren and his car were just descending on the elevator, and barely a minute later he reached the hospital.

Meanwhile, nothing had been done. The young doctor in temporary charge of the case had seen no serious indications, no need for action in the absence of his superior, whose arrival he momentarily expected. He had made, however, the interesting discovery that the woman's golden hair owed its attractive color to some chemical agent; and he had communicated the news to a brunet nurse, who had gratified a long-standing envy by declaring that the hair looked exactly like Eleanor Per-

ry's. "No more than a feather duster is like an angel's wing," the doctor retorted; and an animated dispute upon this point was being waged across the unconscious patient's body when Warren entered the room.

A random sunbeam glinted on the woman's crown of spurious gold; the mass of high color caught Warren's eye, and for a moment he was vaguely affected emotionally by the resemblance which the nurse had pointed out. Then he looked at the face, and the impression passed away, to be succeeded by a curious conjecture. He went and laid his hands upon the woman's head, which lay so prettily turned to the right, and gently tried to move it. In vain; the head was rigidly fixed in that position. The unfortunate creature had suffered a dislocation of the neck.

The usual result of such an injury is immediate death. In rare instances the vertebrae are displaced without damage to the vital nerve they guard. No sign of such harm was visible in the present case, but the situation was extremely grave, of course, and the risk of fatal consequences from surgical interference too great to be hastily assumed. Under Warren's orders, the woman was removed to a private room, and put to bed; and there she presently regained consciousness through the unassisted processes of nature.

Upon returning to this world of many troubles, she found in the front rank of them the fact that she could not move her head. Naturally she was much alarmed, and besought Warren to do something for her relief immediately. His response was not calculated to increase her alarm, but she saw through it, and became wildly and shamelessly terror-stricken. She escaped hysteria, however, by the rule that it follows more commonly a slight than a serious hurt; and gradually she allowed herself to be persuaded that she was not going to die right away.

Her mind began to take hold of other matters. She had faced death like a coward; she now faced life in a manner not more creditable. At first she had seemed to disregard questions

about herself because she could not think of anything except her peril; but the time came when her refusal could no longer be explained in that way.

Warren perceived that the woman had a secret which filled her with fear. Distrusting everybody, even herself, she dared not enter upon any disclosure, however trivial; she would not answer the simplest question about her physical state without a spasm of anxious consideration as to whether the topic might be safe. She refused to tell her name, age, residence, or to sanction any communication with relative or friend.

"Nobody needs to know about me," she said; and offered bribes for secrecy.

In the course of practice Warren had come across many common scandals, and he was too wise in such matters to mistake the present case for one of them. He knew that this woman was not concerned merely for her reputation, and that the accident of which she had been the victim had interrupted her in something more momentous than an indiscreet adventure. But she, whenever her tongue escaped restraint, professed to be anxious only about a gold-mounted shopping bag and a silk umbrella with a topaz set in the handle, which she had been carrying when the car struck her, and which had disappeared. Could they be recovered? she asked. She would pay a large reward; she would give Warren any sum he might ask if he would find out, in confidence, who had taken the things. And as she seemed to worry quite as much about the umbrella as about the bag and its contents, Warren naturally suspected that her interest was not in the articles themselves, but in the possible presence upon the scene of her mishap of some particular person who had tracked her there, and had stolen her belongings for purposes of blackmail. The peculiar odor of "big money" was strong in this affair, and a full exposure would probably follow. Warren looked down upon his patient with a sneer, wondering for the hundredth time why the women in New York's celebrated cases are invariably cattle.

She was a plump, healthy, pretty creature of thirty or a little more, with blue eyes and a clear, vividly tinted skin. Her hair has been remarked upon already; it had originally been dark brown, almost black perhaps, and had been very recently changed to gold by some especially talented alchemist, for no ordinary price. Obviously its wearer could afford to pay for such superior service; she had money and leisure for the enhancement of her charms; but no art could ever make her a lady of quality. To Warren's shrewd eye, she looked like a parlor maid who had married a millionaire long enough ago to be now well used to luxury.

Her clothing had revealed nothing as to her identity. Her hat, shoes, dress, and one or two other articles bore the names of dealers who had made or sold them—Chicago firms in all cases—but her own name appeared nowhere. Everything was of fine quality, and seemed never to have been worn before. Many jeweled rings, and a wedding circlet of plain gold, were on her fingers, but no one had been inspired to examine them for inscriptions while she was unconscious. The only personal marking anywhere discovered was an initial W childishly embroidered on a chamois-skin bag lying hidden upon her breast, and supported by a ribbon round her throat. It had been removed, and reverently consigned to a special drawer in the hospital's safe, for it contained ten thousand dollars—nine bills of the denomination of one thousand, and two of five hundred.

All these things were strange enough, but a much greater mystery eclipsed them soon. It happened that the hospital was crowded; the interesting patient had been put into the apartment de luxe, not merely because she seemed able to afford the expense, but because there was no other place for her. The nurses already had their hands full, and Miss Perry, whose month of night duty had ended at seven that morning, volunteered to take the new case till some one else could be assigned. She had arranged this with Doctor Warren at

his arrival, and had gone to her room to dress for work. The doctor thought she was a long time about it, and he was on the point of sending for her when she came upon the scene.

She was a picture in the pretty uniform of the Lawrence, and rarely failed to excite a pleasant interest in patients who were not too much occupied with their pains and terrors; but the effect in the present instance was of another sort altogether. At sight of her the nameless woman stopped speaking in the middle of a word, startled and apparently incredulous. Her eyes opened wider and wider as she stared at Miss Perry; the momentary doubt which she had seemed to feel was followed by some extraordinary conviction. She pointed beyond Warren, toward whom Miss Perry was advancing from the door behind him, and cried out:

"Why is she here? Why is she here in that dress? Who is she?"

"This is Miss Perry, your nurse," Warren began; but the woman burst forth in a wild panic of protest, mingled with incomprehensible accusations of conspiracy. Yet she seemed rational; her suspicion, whatever it might be, was plainly based on error, and not on delusion; and she retained sufficient self-control to refuse any explanation, and to guard her tongue from disclosures. But she never ceased to talk in a frenzied strain until Miss Perry had left the room, and Warren had promised over and over again that he would tell his amazing patient all she could possibly wish to know about the girl.

The story of Eleanor Perry had been printed in every newspaper in the city two years ago, when she became a nurse at the Lawrence. The point was merely that she had been reared in luxury, and cast suddenly into poverty at the death of her father, who was thought to be rich. Eleanor's beauty and the fact that her father had been very well known were the reasons for the extensive publication; and the matter had been revived from time to time in the Sunday supplements, as an excuse for publishing a pretty picture. That the patient seemed never to have heard

Miss Perry's name, and had not recognized her from the many printed portraits, might be regarded as evidental of a residence elsewhere than in New York. To quiet her, and in the hope that she would ask some question which would give a clew to her identity, Warren told the story in considerable detail.

The effect was unsatisfactory. Warren seemed not to cover the point in which this woman was interested, but she refrained from giving him any hint as to what this point might be. His suggestion that she had mistaken Miss Perry for some one else made no impression, and elicited no response. He perceived that she seized upon any mention of Eleanor's friends, and he worked in as many names as he could think of, but if the patient knew any of these people she made no sign of it.

Meanwhile her excitement, which had subsided when the doctor began his narration, rose again to a dangerous pitch, and eventually he was obliged to quiet her with a drug. Under its influence she lost command of her tongue, and muttered deliriously. She seemed to imagine that she was writing a letter to a man whom she wished to warn of some great and imminent peril. Eleanor Perry was mentioned in this communication, but the only other name which Warren could distinguish was Robinson. Whether this was the person to be warned he could not make out, nor could he catch a number which was spoken along with the name as if it were an address. The last figure was six, but the others might be any in the arithmetic.

The woman waked for a few moments to a clearer consciousness; she asked whether she had been talking, and was solemnly assured that she had not.

"Can't I be taken somewhere else?" she pleaded.

"Not to-day. Impossible," replied Warren.

"Don't let her come in here—that girl!"

"No, no," said he; "Miss Perry is on another case by this time—at the farther end of the building."

That falsehood seemed to be good medicine, and with a sigh the woman fell asleep. Warren watched her for a few minutes, and then left her in the care of a nurse who had been waiting outside the door.

On the stairs he was overtaken by Miss Perry, who was hurrying down. She had changed to street dress again.

"Are you going out?" he asked. "My car's at the door. I'd be glad to take you anywhere you wish."

"Thank you," she said. "I'm only going to the stationer's."

"Writing hard on that play, I suppose. More paper, eh? Have you killed the villain yet?"

"Not yet," she answered, with a smile. "That's in the next act."

Some persons on the stairs had now passed out of hearing.

"That was a strange business up there," said Warren, with a backward gesture. "What do you make of it?"

"Why, nothing at all," she said. "I don't know this woman. She was hysterical, wasn't she?"

"Not in the least," he replied. "She had a perfectly sane desire to find out who you are."

"And you told her?"

"I saw no objection."

"No, indeed. But it seems hardly rational for her to have been so terrified at the sight of a total stranger. How do you account for it?"

"Oh, I give it up," said he. "By the way, she mentioned a person called Robinson. Have you any idea who he is?"

"Robinson?"

"Yes."

"There are so many Robins, of course. Let me think." She seemed to be trying to remember, and they walked out to the street in silence. "Really it's remarkable," she said at last; "I can't recall ever having set eyes upon a man named Robinson."

"The woman has made some sort of mistake, of course," said he. "A queer case. I shall have to see her again after dinner. Shall you be here about half past seven?"

"Yes," said she, "I think so."

He started his car, and she watched him till he vanished in the stream of Broadway. Then she walked eastward, though the stationer's shop lay in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER II.

Doctor Warren had supposed that he knew Eleanor Perry from the cradle up. He could think of nothing which afforded him the smallest basis for a conjecture as to a possible link between her and the nameless patient, apparently a creature of so different origin and fiber; yet he was convinced that the link was real, not an error, not a delusion. He was deeply concerned to know the truth, to know it in advance of its discovery by others.

An ultimate full disclosure seemed inevitable. The injured woman would probably die; an investigation by the authorities would follow, and whatever secret she was now endeavoring to conceal would come to light. There was little reason to suppose that this could affect Eleanor injuriously, or touch Warren's personal interests at all; but the man was so peculiarly situated with reference to Eleanor that a mere hint of any mystery in her relations with the world filled him with harrowing anxieties whose cause ran back to the time of her bereavement and the alteration in her fortunes.

Eleanor was the daughter of the late Doctor Ogden Perry, a fashionable physician, who had contracted from his clients the disease of wishing to get money without earning it, and had become a reckless and persistent gambler in stocks.

By this folly he lost much, but never his good nature. Everything in the world amused Perry, not through heartlessness, but from conviction. He saw this mortal life very small, an incident between two eternities, a few brief scenes in a drama infinitely long—scenes to be played with spirit and a touch of humor; and Eleanor was surerst of her father's praise when she dismissed some childish disappointment with a jest.

Doubtless to the very last he believed that Eleanor's future was secure in a pecuniary sense. Even the fatal year of nineteen-seventeen, which wrecked his fortune, did not destroy his optimism, for he foresaw that it would be followed by the chance of a lifetime for any gambler in stocks. His error lay not in the word "chance," but in that other equally uncertain word "lifetime." For in the late fall of the panic year a patient who had been ruined by the bank failures developed violent mania in Perry's consulting room, and proceeded to batter him over the head with a chair, under the influence of the singular delusion that the doctor was a certain financier whom the lunatic supposed to be the author of his misfortunes. This was a joke which Perry would not have been too modest to enjoy; its point lay in the fact that Perry was often called the handsomest man in New York, while the financier possessed every fatal gift except beauty.

Perry subdued the madman, and presently related the occurrence in his usual manner to Doctor Warren, whom he called in to help him dress his hurts, joking about the relative hardness of his own head and the broken chair. Warren took a somewhat more serious view of the case, but was far from anticipating the result which followed. He had barely left the house when Perry lapsed into unconsciousness from which he never revived. The physician, returning an hour later on an errand of business, was astounded to find his colleague in the grip of death.

Perry's brief will made his orphan girl sole heiress, and it was thought that the estate was large. When, however, the executor came to look for the property he could not find it. The city residence and the Long Island cottage were mortgaged above the tops of their chimneys; the furniture and pictures barely served to pay the debts of the estate. Wall Street seemed to have swallowed everything, and Eleanor, then twenty years old, was left to face the world with little but the accidental contents of her purse.

Certain relatives who had sprung up

from nowhere with startling suddenness when Perry died vanished like scared ghosts at the news of his poverty.

Doctor Warren showed much sympathy at this time, and Eleanor, who had at first felt bitterly toward him for having failed to save her father—despite indisputable proof that it could not have been done—was much affected by his kindness. For years he had been on intimate terms in their house, and she remembered that her father had said quite recently that he felt himself under serious obligations to Warren. This she had taken to imply friendship and valuable assistance, but what Perry had really and secretly meant was that he had led Warren into the habit of speculating in stocks, and had thus brought his younger professional brother to the brink of ruin.

The last thing that Perry did in this life was based in part upon this feeling of responsibility for Warren's pecuniary situation, which was at that time desperate. Perry had just bought a thousand shares of steel common outright for about eighteen thousand dollars. He had the shares at his house on the day when he received his mortal injury. They were indorsed in blank, which means that Perry's name did not anywhere appear upon them; they belonged ostensibly to anybody who had them in his possession.

It was Perry's amiable intention to get a loan upon them from a bank if that could be managed at such a time of stress, and let Warren have a part of the proceeds. The affair with the madman had made it impossible for Perry to leave the house, but as Warren's need of the loan was immediate the stock was intrusted to him to see what he could get on it. When he returned to Perry's house the shares were already pledged, the loan secured, and the money in Warren's pocket. A part had been intended for his own use. He kept it all, held his tongue, with no dishonest purpose in the beginning.

The fact that his friend died practically bankrupt was almost as much of a surprise to Warren as to anybody

else. Unfortunately he learned first that the purchase of the thousand shares of steel was not recorded in Perry's chaotic accounts. There was not even anything to show a payment to a broker; the deal must have been made with cash, or with somebody else's check. Before Warren had mentioned the matter to anybody he discovered that the stock would probably not be traced among Perry's assets.

In the meantime, Warren had used nearly all the amount of the loan to stem the tide of disaster in his own affairs, and the situation looked so bad that now he was afraid to speak. He had no thought of stealing the stock; the idea of any fraud upon Eleanor would have been horrible and monstrous to his mind. His sympathy for her was perfectly genuine. He was already in love with her, though not with full consciousness of it; his earnest wish was to assist and protect her.

As the truth about Perry's estate began to be revealed Warren conceived the idea that it would be better to say nothing about the stock lest it should be swallowed up by his friend's debts. He felt that Perry had bought the shares as an investment, an anchor to windward for Eleanor, and it seemed unjust that she should fail to gain the benefit. Warren resolved to save the stock for her, and to do it secretly.

Till this could be accomplished, some means of livelihood must be found for her. A double motive urged Warren to keep her near him, and he advised her, therefore, to become a nurse, for which profession she was partly prepared. She had private leanings toward writing, but some angel whispered to her that it must not be done for money, so she chose the way of life which Warren recommended, and eventually was enrolled on the staff of the Lawrence.

She gave a little time to fiction, but Warren gave more. How many stories he invented for the day when he should clear Eleanor's stock from its entanglements Heaven may know. None of them was ever told. The strange thing is, of course, that he should have failed. An imbecile might have made money

on Wall Street after the panic was over, but Warren, for all his brains, continued to lose.

And now, at the end of two years and a half, his situation was this: He still retained the ownership of the stock, which was worth over ninety thousand dollars; but all of it was held by banks as collateral for loans, and he had just borrowed—and lost—the last dollar which could be obtained on those securities. A consistent pessimist, he believed that steel was going down, that the stock would have to be sold, and that there would be very little left after his notes were met. He had stolen Eleanor's fortune and gambled it away. His love for her had steadily increased, but it was a thing he dared not think of, not only for shame of his concealed dishonor, but for dread that even after all this lapse of time his secret should be known, and he be driven from the world.

He was not the man to endure an exposure of that sort, and he had lived for thirty months in readiness for instant and disgraceful death. The chief thing to his credit during this time was his concealment of his love under the temptation of what might have been mistaken for encouragement.

But his career no longer gave him any satisfaction, though he continued to hold a high place in the profession, and even to adyance in the esteem of his colaborers in that good field. The lust of money had corrupted him even before it led him into positive dishonesty, and the practice of his art had been reduced with him to the level of a business conducted for private gain.

Of late he had definitely made up his mind to get money by any means, partly because he had come to desire it more and more, but chiefly that he might escape from that terror of discovery which had become a fixed idea. He was tempted to solve both parts of his life's problems at one stroke by marrying a fortune; and there is little doubt he could have done it, being one of those men whose superficial hardness, with a hint of cruelty, potential but restrained, excites and fascinates a cer-

tain proportion of the females of our species. By this expedient he could pay his debt to Eleanor, and at the same time be done with that love which had so greatly tortured him as to be now almost hateful.

The affair of the mysterious patient touched the spring of Warren's peculiar terrors, for it seemed to show him how little he really knew of Eleanor's private life in these days. His constant dread had been that chance would throw her into contact with some person who would put a hint of the truth into her mind. This fear was fanciful; Warren had no rational idea how such a thing could happen. The broker through whom Doctor Perry bought his steel had failed a few days after, and had fled to parts unknown, leaving a mere ripple on the surface of that turbulent time. So far as Warren was aware, the purchase of the shares was absolutely unknown to anybody except himself, and yet upon a hint that Eleanor had acquaintances somewhat mysterious, and hitherto unheard of, he fancied them to be a source of danger to himself.

He was not satisfied with Eleanor's disclaimer of all knowledge of the man called Robinson; it had not rung true. Who could this person be? And Warren wearied his brains trying to guess that riddle for whose solution he possessed not a single relevant fact. His common sense told him that the effort was entirely absurd, yet he became more and more absorbed with it as he rode aimlessly northward through the town, a danger to pedestrians.

In the midst of this mental struggle to make something out of nothing he became aware of sudden darkness and a pall upon the heavens. A thunder-storm had sidled down from the northward and cut off the sun. There was a scurrying of cars, and Warren joined the rout, reaching the Athletic Club on Fifty-ninth Street just as the first drops were falling. He telephoned to the garage for a man to take his car, and then went in to dine, though it was earlier than his usual hour.

His bodily part was soon busy with

an excellent and varied repast, but his mind fared all the while upon a single dish, and the name of it was matrimony. He accepted marriage as the sole possible way out of his trouble, and set himself grimly to select the bride. There were two possible candidates for this honor, and it is hardly necessary to say that the richer of the two was by far the less attractive. Almost a quart of excellent champagne failed to help him to a satisfactory decision.

"Hello, doctor!" said a man, halting beside the table. "Alone?" And he took the opposite chair without waiting to be invited.

This individual was a recent and very grateful patient of Warren's, a well-known figure in Wall Street, not for any influence he wielded there, but chiefly for his personal charm. A very handsome man was Mr. Hardy, and one whom you would never think to be an idler; yet in all his life he had not done a minute's useful work, never anything at all except speculate. He played the game with wonderful steadiness and moderation, not trying to attain wealth at a stroke, but merely to satisfy his wants. In his own phrase, he drew a salary from the Street, and he would tell his friends occasionally that he had raised the stipend on the ground of some newly discovered merit in himself. He had passed a week or more of March very cheerfully in the best room at the Lawrence, mending after a neat bit of Warren's surgery.

It is significant that Warren could not look at Hardy without thinking instantly of Eleanor, who had nursed him; of Wall Street, where he gambled; and of a thousand shares of steel stock which had once belonged to Doctor Perry. He had to put this idea out of his mind by a definite effort before he could speak, but his voice came cool and firm.

"Hello, Hardy!" said he. "Anything new in the Street?"

The man studied Warren's face with friendly interest.

"You're a cold-blooded reptile," said he at last; "but you're a bully old

butcher just the same, and I owe you a good turn. So listen to me: Save your money, keep out of the market this summer, and come to me on the first day of September. I will put you onto a good thing."

The character and record of the man gave these words weight, but September looked a long way off to Warren.

"It must be a large egg," said he, "to be so long hatching. What is the nature—"

Hardy checked him with a gesture. "I've gone as far as I can," said he. "Confidential, you understand. Now, let's talk of something else. How is Miss Perry? Well? That's good! Beautiful girl." He squinted at the doctor's glass. "Do you know, I can see a yellow gleam in that wine of yours that is like the light in her hair if anything can be like it. Do you remember her when she was a child?"

Warren made a sound which might be Yes or No.

"I do," said Hardy. "I didn't know her then, of course, but I used to see her once in a while—when I was a youngster. Her hair hasn't changed a bit. Hair has a confounded bad habit of growing darker with years. They say it's because we're all mongrels more or less, and the dark in us tends to come out. No such calamity has overtaken her, or ever will. Hair the same—eyes the same, baby blue. Sounds silly for eyes like hers, but that's the name of it, I believe. What do you care, you old sorbet of Siberian punch? I suppose you never looked at Miss Perry in any human way."

This was surgery without ether, but Warren bore it and did not flinch.

"I admire her very much," said he. "We are good friends, I hope." Hardy nodded slowly.

"Yes," said he; "I rather thought so, but I wanted to hear you say it. I have taken the liberty, since I came to know Miss Perry at the hospital, of meddling a bit in her affairs, though I haven't seen her, and she knows nothing about it. The fact is, I tried to get on the track of a little money which she ought to have."

Warren raised his glass with careful steadiness, and drank the wine.

"Indeed?" said he. "With what success?"

"None, I am very sorry to say," was the response.

And it was a full minute before Warren heard anything more, though Hardy did not cease to speak.

The next words that Warren caught were these: "We located Ballinger in Winnipeg, but it was no use. He knows only that Doctor Perry took the shares, indorsed in blank. There was a record of the transaction, but it was destroyed with other papers more or less accidentally after the failure. I am afraid that it is now absolutely impossible to trace that stock. We had the transfer books examined, of course, but they gave no clew. I suppose Doctor Perry must have got rid of the shares in some way, though he had but very little time in which to do it."

Ballinger was the broker through whom Doctor Perry had bought his steel. His whereabouts had been unknown, and Warren had hoped that the man was dead. As for the transfer books, he had not feared them, for the stock had never stood in his name.

"It's an odd thing," continued Hardy, "that Ballinger should have told me about Doctor Perry's buying that steel. I forget why it was mentioned; I had an account with Ballinger myself, and was closing it in a considerable hurry on information of his status. As for the matter of Doctor Perry's purchase, I never thought of it again until it suddenly popped into my head one night while I was lying awake in my little bed at the Lawrence. I was curious to know what had become of the shares, and as soon as I got out I asked Stewart about them." Stewart was a lawyer, and the executor named in Doctor Perry's will. "He told me he had never heard of the matter before. The shares hadn't shown up. So we made an investigation, very thorough, but entirely futile, I regret to say. A thousand steel common at to-day's figure would secure Miss Perry's future, and enable her to do as she likes. That

wouldn't be nursing, I suspect, though it's an occupation very suitable to her genius."

Warren took a deep breath. "What do you think became of the stock?" he asked.

"No one will ever know," Hardy replied. "Perhaps somebody stole it, helped by Perry's sudden death. Those were wild days. It will never be traced, worse luck."

Warren bowed his head, as if in regretful acquiescence, but in fact a wave of exquisite relief surged through his blood. If such a man as Hardy, shrewd, experienced, lavish of expense, had failed to find a clew to the secret, none would ever be found.

"There is a point about which I wish to ask your advice," Hardy went on. "Miss Perry is so peculiarly situated, so utterly alone, that the matter is rather difficult. You have been very kind to her, as she told me at the hospital; you were her father's friend, and so far as any one has taken his place for her you are the man."

Warren sat up straight, and looked across at Hardy with a new alarm.

"I am past forty," he said, "but hardly old enough, perhaps, to be consulted in exactly this way."

"The matter is pecuniary," responded Hardy, with the ghost of a smile. "It concerns only the poor remnant of her father's estate which Stewart has saved for Miss Perry out of the wreck. Almost insignificant, of course, but we might be able to build it up to the proportions of a small nest egg next September. The investment would be speculative, and you would be justified in advising her against it. What I wish is that you will permit me to guarantee Miss Perry against loss privately—through you or Stewart. Considered as a question of delicacy—well, it can't be even thought of; yet I think you'll admit that the case is exceptional. Miss Perry was probably robbed, and I have failed to trace the property. It went into the Street no doubt. Let me get a small part of it out again. That's all I ask. It's the only sort of thing I have the least ability to do, and I'm un-

der some obligations to Miss Perry. Let me do it."

Warren had no anxiety about a possible loss in any speculation recommended by Hardy, and the question of delicacy did not trouble him in the least; but a confirmed habit of considering his own interests led him to oppose any other man's offer to do Eleanor a conspicuous favor.

"This is hardly the thing, you know," he said, with gravity. "I must have time to think it over."

"As to that," responded Hardy, "the whole summer is at your disposal. I spoke to you to-night because I'm going abroad. I sail to-morrow, to be gone two months." He rose, extending his hand. "Will you remember me to Miss Perry, and renew my thanks? I shall not have the opportunity to see her."

"Yes," said Warren; "surely." He took Hardy's hand with an uncontrollable shudder, thinking of the weeks this man had spent in a blind effort to destroy him, with the strange result of bringing him at last the assurance of safety.

He watched the graceful fellow out of sight, profoundly glad to be rid of him. Though he seemed to have been willfully avoiding Eleanor, he had been working all the time in her interests, and this could not be explained to Warren's satisfaction as the mere gratitude of a patient toward a nurse. There must be some deeper feeling in the heart of this man, who might be, if he chose, so dangerous a rival.

This thought of rivalry was now definitely in Warren's mind; indeed, it had arisen necessarily from the nature of the interview. The fear of ultimate detection had been the sole influence which for two years and more had restrained him from a definite attempt to win Eleanor's love. He believed that he could be happy in the humblest station of life with her, though the love of money had penetrated the marrow of his bones, and he knew it.

And he had never lost for one moment his determination to restore her property. How deep and indestructible this desire had been no man can under-

stand who has not known the hearts of various thieves. But since the existence of the stolen stock had been discovered how would it ever be possible for Warren to make any restitution? No fiction would be safe. Both Hardy and Stewart now knew too much. The only possible way to give Eleanor anything was to give her everything, to share with her. Honor seemed to point to the same path as desire, as it usually will for men of this kind unless some very formidable barrier opposes. None now existed, and Warren saw his way clear.

A high degree of confidence inspired him. He was a man of magnificent vanity, so closely woven in with solid merit and sound judgment that the fault had rarely been remarked in him. In the present matter, he was perfectly right in believing that he had seen many signs of Eleanor's favor. It was true that he was in pecuniary straits, with little in the world but his professional income. This was large, however, and might be greatly increased now that the haunting terror of disgrace would no longer dull his efforts. He would forego gambling—and in the same instant of this resolve he thought with satisfaction of Hardy's promised tip. All would go well. He was experiencing a tremendous emotional reaction, as he partly realized; yet he trusted none the less in the visions it created. The joy of life was once more in the saddle, and riding hard.

He cut short his dinner, and left the club so hastily that he forgot to telephone a necessary message to his office. This business he dispatched in the nearest drug store, and his mind was free of trifles. He walked briskly down the avenue on his way to the Lawrence, thrilling with the feverish joy of the lucky. An imitation of an approving conscience warmed his inside; compared with what he had designed to do, this present quest looked clean. He had escaped from mercenary temptations, and was now to make a love match. There was no religion in the man, yet he felt—not humbly, but with a kind of vanity—that a higher power had intervened to save him from a base-

ness into which he might have been unjustly forced. It would be well to follow luck as it ran, and speak to Eleanor that night.

CHAPTER III.

The city had been deluged while he dined, and though the rain had ceased rivulets ran in the streets, and nearly all the sky was dark with clouds. Few people had come out from shelter even on the avenue, and Fifty-fifth Street seemed all his own as he walked on toward the hospital. He was midway in the block, and had seen no one, when suddenly a colored man, cheaply uniformed for hall service, burst from a doorway, tripped on the low stoop, and fell into the arms of the doctor, who was not quick enough to avoid this involuntary rescue.

For some seconds the two men were entangled in a sort of wrestling grip before Warren could shake himself free.

"Stand up, you idiot!" said he. "What are you trying to do?"

"Whar'd he go?" exclaimed the negro, looking wildly round.

Warren ignored the question, and adjusted his coat and tie. The negro spoke again: "Didn't you see nobody?" And Warren was aware that it was not to him that the words were addressed, but to some one behind him. He turned, and was amazed to see Eleanor Perry.

"Eleanor!" he exclaimed. "Where did you come from? I didn't see you."

"Oh, I just crossed the street," she answered lightly. "What's the matter with the man? His face is bleeding."

At this the negro put up a hand to his cheek, which was smeared with blood.

"It's of no consequence, I guess," said Warren. "Shall we go on?"

"Let's ask the man how he was hurt," said she; and then to the negro: "Did some one strike you?"

In response he began a rambling story of having heard a struggle and a fall as of some person struck down in one of the apartments. Warren

checked him there, and drew him into the vestibule beyond earshot of two or three persons who seemed disposed to loiter and listen.

The negro went on to tell how he had been in his own basement room at the time of this disturbance. It was directly over his head. He stepped out through a window into a court at the rear of the building, and at the same moment a man jumped down behind him from a fire-escape balcony. Before he could turn, or even get a glimpse of his assailant, he was seized by the ankles and flung backward over the man's shoulder, headfirst, through the window into his own room again; and it was thus that he had received the scratch on his face. Picking himself up, he looked into the court, expecting to see the man scaling the fence which separated it from some vacant lots; but no one was visible, and the negro supposed his adversary had escaped into the house. He therefore ran into the basement, up the stairs, and through the hall to the street, where he collided with Warren.

"You're the doctor over to the hospital, ain't you?" he asked. "Well, you better come along in. Less Ah'm wrong, we'll find somebody hurted worse'n me."

This did not strike the doctor as a promising professional call. He glanced instinctively at the building, and estimated the means of the dwellers therein. It had once been an ordinary apartment house, but was now divided into small bachelor suites and studios.

"No, I haven't time," said Warren; and then his eye happened to light on the number over the door. The last figure was six, and this absurdly trivial coincidence stirred Warren's interest so that he asked: "Who's hurt, do you think? In whose rooms did this happen?"

"Mr. Rob'nsn's," replied the negro.

There was a moment's silence. "Go in and see if anything is wrong," said Warren slowly. "We'll wait in the hall."

A knot of people was now gathering on the sidewalk, and when the janitor

had admitted Warren and Eleanor into the house an urchin thrust his leg across the threshold, and prevented the door from closing. The janitor had too much on his mind to notice this; he hastened rearward, and rapped loudly on a door that bore the number three.

An inarticulate and groaning voice responded; it was audible where Eleanor and Warren stood, and the girl hurried down the hall, with Warren at her heels. They heard a scrambling struggle, culminating in a heavy fall, just as the trembling negro managed to find the keyhole with his pass-key.

The opening door disclosed a dimly lighted sitting room of good size, over-furnished in a florid style. To the left were two tall windows, which revealed themselves against the leaden twilight of the storm; to the right was the broad doorway of a bedroom whence an electric lamp in a red globe shone out diagonally through a Japanese portière. On the floor in the midst of the red blur of light a man lay sprawling, dizzily endeavoring to rise. He was a heavy, John Bull sort of man, in a loose gray suit, with a fancy waistcoat of a lively design. He was breathing hard, with a snoring sound; his teeth were clenched, and his whole countenance was flushed as if with wrath, and puckered with fierce striving to control his muscles that he might stand. Across the left side of his forehead was a long wound extending into the hair.

To Warren's mind as he viewed this spectacle recurred the mutterings of the patient who dared not tell her name. "So this is Robinson?" he thought. "And it has happened—the thing that woman knew was coming. But what has Eleanor to do with people such as these?"

The woman at the Lawrence was an impossible person. This man was even a cut below her; he looked like an English groom who had risen to be a lucky follower of the races; and Warren turned from him to Eleanor with a heavy sense of bewilderment.

He saw her standing with a disciplined readiness. She had been his helper hundreds of times, and she was

waiting to do the like again, but with a thrilling impatience that he had never seen in her before. Her face wore that pallid, hard, sharpened look which denotes both horror and the extreme tension of anxiety. It was impossible to suppose that she was seriously affected by the very ordinary spectacle of a man with a fractured skull. Plainly this fellow was a man to her, and not merely a case, and instantly it became the first business of Warren's life to find out why. Such knowledge as he had of women assured him that he could not get the truth from Eleanor at that time if ever; but he might get some of it from Robinson, and to him therefore he turned his attention.

"Don't try to get up," said he, kneeling beside him. "Take it easy where you are. Who did this?"

Robinson seemed about to pour out his story in that style of open protest against wrong so common in cases of injury, so childish, and often so pathetic. The natural human creature is such a simple fool, with his quaint conception of personal rights which he conceives to be violated whenever he has a pain. But some influence checked this particular grown-up baby, and he swallowed his sense of injustice with a gulp.

Warren, whose back was toward the door, received the impression that a person had come in before whom the patient did not wish to speak. He looked over his shoulder, therefore, and saw no one except Eleanor, who had not moved from her position; but it seemed to Warren that he had turned just in time to see her make a warning gesture with the left hand.

If this were some signal to the injured man, it was the first indication of an acquaintance between them. They had behaved as strangers, and even now the fellow rolled his eyes toward Eleanor blankly, as if he were indifferent to her presence. It was possible he might not see anything very clearly; certainly his mind was somewhat obscured. He cried out to the janitor: "Here, you, Andrew, give me a hand till I get on my feet." And then he went rambling on, talking to himself

rather than to the negro: "They got the golden egg, but not the goose that laid it. I'll be all right; I'll fix 'em. I must get up. Give me a lift, Andrew."

The negro stared blankly.

"Mr. Rob'nson," said he, "you-all better lay quiet. Dis gen'leman's a doctor, an' he wants to tend to you."

"I didn't call him, and I don't want him!" cried Robinson, with violence. "Everybody get out of this room—that's what I want!"

Eleanor stepped forward, and bent toward him.

"You must not talk," she said; "the doctor——"

Robinson consigned the doctor to eternal flames in a wild yell of exasperation, and then he had the grace to be ashamed. He mumbled an apology to Eleanor, but instantly burst out again: "I can't lie here! I'm in a hurry, I tell you! Let me up!"

"All right, all right," said Warren. "We mustn't get excited. Let me have a look at that head of yours; it'll take only a moment." And he continued deftly to prevent the man from rising, just as any other doctor would have done under the same circumstances; but the welfare of the patient was a minor consideration with Warren. The mystery of Eleanor's relation to this affair was of more consequence to him than the broken skulls of all the Robinsons that ever lived.

Would this fellow survive, and keep his faculties long enough to tell what he knew? That was the question, and the answer was not easy to give. Robinson had received a heavy blow with something that had a dull cutting edge; but the instrument, whatever it was, had struck flatwise, hardly breaking the skin except at the middle point of the wound. Beneath that spot there seemed to be a small fracture with slight depression. The real damage was deeper, and had resulted from the transmitted force of the stroke which had felled the man. There was bleeding at the ear; the eyes had a fixed and staring look, and the pupils, on a hasty test, showed no reaction.

Without attempting a diagnosis in the time which he conceived to be at his disposal, and with the means at hand, Warren saw reason to suspect that this was one of the cases in which consciousness is retained for a brief period following serious injury to the head, and is then lost, perhaps forever, as the result of pressure due to hemorrhage in the brain. Robinson might recover; it was improbable. He might sink into oblivion beyond rescue at any moment; it was the likeliest thing on the cards.

While making this examination Warren had asked no questions to which an answer would be refused. He had kept two objects in view: To ingratiate himself with the patient, and covertly to frighten him. As to the latter purpose, the eye test seemed to have been quite successful.

"You've had a hard bump," said the doctor. "You'll have to rest a little while." And he fixed a cushion under the patient's head. "Who hit you?"

"Never you mind," responded Robinson. "I'll attend to this. Let me get up!"

"Did he hit you with this stone?" asked the doctor, lifting a small slab of marble that lay on the rug. It had been a part of the hearth, and had covered a hole made by the removal of some bricks—a hiding place that must have cost much secret labor.

Robinson answered with impatience that he had not been hurt in the manner indicated. He gave no attention to the marble, or to the little empty crypt which it had covered.

"You've been robbed," said the doctor. "You'd better tell me how it happened."

"I'll tell you nothing!" answered Robinson sullenly. "Let me alone!"

He strove to rise, but Warren was too strong and too clever. It began to dawn upon Robinson that this lean-faced, gray-eyed man knew too many tricks, and could keep him lying there for an indefinite time. He subsided into extreme quiet for a fraction of a minute, and then made a sudden sidelong movement, and snatched a revolver

which had been hidden by an overturned chair. Instantly Warren's steady hand closed on the other's wrist like a metal clamp.

"Give me that," said the doctor coolly. "I'll take care of it." Then to Eleanor, in the same quiet tone: "You'd better stand aside."

"Is it his?" she exclaimed. "Ask him. He'll tell you."

Robinson did not wait for the question; he uttered an affirmative growl. The weapon had now passed into Warren's hand, and as he tossed it behind him he gave a quick glance to Eleanor, and observed that she had been relieved by Robinson's admission. She had shown no fear of the revolver; the ownership alone was what had interested her, and Warren drew the inevitable inference that her attitude toward this crime was due to her belief as to the perpetrator. A wild idea had been in Warren's mind that Eleanor herself might have done it, or at least have been present as an accomplice, and that she had restrained Robinson from accusing her by means of some peculiar influence over him. The saner theory that the murderer was a man whom Eleanor desired to shield now took the place of Warren's previous absurd suspicion, and set his cold vitals on fire with jealousy.

He was the more determined to extort Robinson's story, and with this end in view he set himself to frighten the man. There are various ways of convincing a patient that his end is approaching without telling him so, and Warren had no difficulty in gaining control of Robinson's mind and gently urging it toward panic.

"Don't be alarmed," said he, in a tone nicely calculated to increase the patient's terror. "You're all right. I'll pull you through."

Robinson looked up steadily into his face, and saw precisely what the doctor meant that he should see.

"You lie!" said Robinson, with a gasp. "I'm done for, and you know it. Speak out, man! Let's have the truth."

"You're badly hurt, my friend," responded Warren. "Who did it?"

At this he was aware that Eleanor was signaling again, though she had drawn back so far that he could watch her only with a corner of an eye. He laid a hand on Robinson's breast, holding him down, and turned toward Eleanor, whom he saw in profile, facing the door. Her wordless messages seemed now addressed to some one who was not in the room.

The doctor took one stride across the body of his patient, and then one more in the same direction. He stood behind Eleanor, and saw from this position a young man who was holding the door as a shield so that it would just cut off Robinson's view. He was a strapping big fellow, blond and handsome in the style of the open-air Englishman—upon the whole a very notable person—but what especially struck Warren was the contrast between the man's manner and the thing that he was doing.

To avoid the eye of Robinson so cautiously at such a moment was an act of thrilling significance, but the man showed no feeling beyond a very civil, sympathetic interest in Eleanor. Otherwise his attitude was passive, his aspect cool beyond the habit of New Yorkers in their calmest hours. The traditional placidity of the well-bred Briton, based upon a vague and boundless self-esteem, was never better exemplified than by this figure, revealed against a background of pale, peering faces of the morbid throng barred from the room by the superior animal on the door sill.

Warren took the measure of the man, and hated him instinctively.

"Come in!" he said curtly. "Come in, and shut the door!"

The man showed his disapproval of the tone in which he had been addressed by a very slight chilliness of manner; and, having thus satisfied his sense of decorum, he made a courteous, deprecatory gesture signifying that he would not intrude. Then he slowly eclipsed himself by drawing the door to till the latch clicked. For an instant Warren was on the point of raising a hue and cry, but his attention was attracted by a noise behind him. Robinson was

climbing to his feet with the labor of an ox, and the doctor, fearing an instant catastrophe, hastened to steady him. The doomed rascal staggered dizzily; he laid a hand on Warren's shoulder, and looked into his face with the pleading eyes of a dumb animal.

The doctor, without a spark of sympathy, watching the man as if he were a mess of chemicals boiling in a flask toward some peculiar crisis, seized the favorable moment to assume an expression of terrifying solemnity.

"Give me that name," he said. "The name first; the story afterward if you have time."

Robinson hesitated, breathing in gasps. He let his eyes roam round the room, and Warren remained perfectly still, knowing what the man was doing. He was looking his last upon his foolish surroundings, the crude and costly things which stood to him for luxury, the settings of a life which he had relished.

"Cliff Wainwright!" he cried suddenly and angrily. "Cliff Wainwright! Why should I let him get away with this?"

"Clifford Wainwright," said the doctor. "You accuse him? You make this charge with full knowledge of your condition?"

Robinson shuddered to his heels.

"Do I know?" he muttered. "Ha! I guess you've driven it in."

His utterance was blurred and uncertain. Warren, aware that it must soon fail completely, thought best to hold him to the chief point, the identity of the murderer.

"You are sure of your man?" he asked. "You knew him well?"

"I've known him ever since he was a nigger," answered Robinson, whose roving eyes happened to fall on Andrew.

"Ever since he was a child," said Warren. "Is that it?"

"He was ten years old. His doctor was eight. That's Henry."

"His brother, do you mean?"

"Henry. Yes. I was their father's horses."

"Coachman? But never mind.

Where can Clifford Wainwright be found?"

Robinson struggled to pronounce a name, and seemed to imagine that he had succeeded. "That's where I saw him," he mumbled. "And I knew—knew in a flash why he'd come. Then I was here, and he came in through the box."

"The window," said Warren. "What about a box? Did he steal one?"

But Robinson's attention had wandered to something else. "She ought to have warned me," said he despairingly. "Why didn't she let me know?"

"She!" cried Warren. "Who?"

The response was a mere jumble of words without coherence. Aphasia resulting from his injury had reached the final stage. The poor rogue stood on the brink of eternity, trying to address a fellow sinner for the last time, and fate, in a kind of mockery, filled his mouth with nonsense. He was willing now to tell his story, but the hour had passed; there remained to him only one intelligible word. He noticed, strangely enough, some signs of distress in Eleanor, which his own state led him to exaggerate.

"Fainting!" he said, and started toward her, breaking from Warren's grip. He took only a single step, but in effect it carried him out of the world; he plunged headlong into the darkness that is beyond. The rising flood in his brain had reached the lamp that makes life visible, and had quenched it forever, though the heart still beat in his breast. A rough fellow, low born, and morally deficient, it should count for something that his last word and act were not for himself, but in a crude way chivalrous.

Eleanor had not fainted, but the tension of the scene had been severe, and she now sat relaxed in one of Mr. Robinson's expensive easy-chairs, waiting for a renewal of strength. She needed no assistance, and Warren turned to the door, which at that moment was pushed wide open, giving entrance to the vanguard of the rabble in the hall. The man whose presence had restrained them was now gone.

Warren looked at them, and, despite his long acquaintance with the miracles of cities, he wondered how they could have sprung up so suddenly in a region so respectable. He knew them to the marrow, however, for of such are the ward and clinic patients of the hospitals, and he herded them out of the room with the skill of a sheep dog. Then, having posted Andrew as a sentinel outside the door, he gave his whole attention to Eleanor. They were practically alone, for death had made good progress with Robinson, rolling him in the strands of his web, fold upon fold of silence.

Warren was greatly excited, and with reason. The world had been changed twice in half an hour; it had been righted, and wrecked. Apparently he had not only lost Eleanor, but the thing had been accomplished by a nightmare change of personality. Eleanor bound by secret ties to thieves and ruffians was another woman. She had striven desperately to shield the murderer and prevent the disclosure of his name. Her behavior indicated that she knew who had hunted Robinson to his death, and why it had been done. And the case looked very bad to an experienced eye.

Inferences, however, were not enough for Warren; he wanted accurate information, and he made the mistake of reaching out for it as if it were his own property. Eleanor perceived this instantly, and resented it, with the result that she concealed whatever she could, not needing any other reason for withholding her confidence than his manner of demanding it.

"Now, Eleanor," he began, with something of his professional authoritative tone, "this case calls for hurry, but I've got to have a little of the history of it. What's the trouble? How do you happen to be concerned in such a dangerous tangle as this?"

"If the police come," said she, "will they detain me?"

"Why, yes; they'll question you, of course. And why they're not here now Heaven knows. You'd better waste no time. Tell me——"

"You're quite right; I must go," she

said, rising hastily. "I have something to do."

He confronted her, amazed.

"But, Eleanor, you can't go like this," said he, "without a word to me. Who is Clifford Wainwright? Why did you try to prevent this man from accusing him?"

"I didn't. - I had no idea what he was going to say. But I don't believe Mr. Wainwright did it."

"Of course he did!" exclaimed Warren. "You heard what Robinson said."

"Yes; but I don't believe he knew what he was saying. He was—"

"He knew just as well as you do this minute," the doctor interrupted. "He was perfectly conscious."

Eleanor shook her head slowly.

"No," said she; "I don't think so."

"I tell you that the man was mentally competent," stormed Warren. "Do you mean that you intend to contradict my testimony—if it comes to that?"

"I shall have to," she replied. "It's what I think."

The doctor perceived that he had been beguiled from the main line of his questioning. He retraced his steps.

"Who is Clifford Wainwright?" he asked. "What is he to you?"

"Why, nothing at all," said she. "I've met a man of that name, perhaps not the same one. He seemed very nice."

At this absurd answer the doctor's breath came out of him with a sound like the whinny of a horse.

"Was it Wainwright who stood at that door?" he demanded.

"Oh, no," said Eleanor, with a faint smile.

"Who was that man?"

"I think he's an artist," she responded. "I met him at some studio affair. I didn't catch his right name."

"Eleanor," he exclaimed, "I can't understand why you should take this extraordinary course with me. You are keeping me out of your confidence. You are rejecting my help. Listen to me! I will do anything you ask."

"It is very kind of you to say so," she responded. "All I ask is that you won't give Mr. Wainwright's name to

the police until you have to. Will you keep it secret till to-morrow?"

"You wish to give a warning to your friends?" he sneered.

"Yes," said she, unmoved; "I think it's only fair. This may cause Mr. Wainwright a great deal of annoyance."

"Annoyance!" Warren echoed. "Well, if you call the electric chair an annoyance! Do you suppose this accusation will be all? Certainly not. It will lead to the exposure of the whole plot, and the arrest of everybody connected with it. There's that woman at the hospital. What chance will Wainwright have when *she* tells her story?"

"Even if he did it, he may have been justified," said Eleanor, evading the reference to the woman.

"The question is," he cried, "do you care to be mixed up in a hideous scandal of this kind?" He pointed to the unconscious form of Robinson. "You doubtless know more of this fellow than I do, but I can see at a glance that there's a story back of him, a mystery surrounding him, and I can hear the whole city ringing with it to-morrow. Look at this little out-of-the-way den, and the expensive furniture that's in it. I'll stake my life that Robinson is known to every rascal of either sex down there." And he waved his hand toward the so-called Lobster Square, the headquarters of gluttony and drunkenness, whose myriad lights now flared in the sky beyond the southern windows.

Eleanor did not fully understand, though she had not been reared in conventional seclusion nor shielded from the news of the day. She was frightened by his words, however; she slipped by him, and laid her hand on the door.

"I must go," she said.

"You will try to help Wainwright. Why? You say you hardly know him. There must be some one else."

"There is some one I must see," she admitted. "Will you do what I asked?"

"About the name? It doesn't rest with me. That negro heard it."

"Oh!" she cried, remembering. "What can we do?"

"Shall I silence him? If I knew what I was doing—Eleanor, if you will only tell me——"

She had been looking quickly about the room. She interrupted him:

"There it is!" She pointed to a little bag on the floor by the chair from which she had just risen. "It's mine. I had forgotten it. There's some money—quite a lot. Will you please use it?"

He stooped to pick up the bag, saying at the same time: "I will use my own money if——" He turned at a sound; it was the door closing behind Eleanor.

CHAPTER IV.

He did not follow her; he remained for some moments perfectly still, stupid with emotions ugly and brutal. He had failed completely in his attempt to question Eleanor, and yet he seemed to know the essential fact that he had lost the game and played the fool, that this girl had been leading a life of which he had known nothing, and had fallen under the influence of some man in whose interest she was now eager to risk whatever she had not already lost.

Warren suffered dire torments during an interval that could not have been rightly measured by the ticking of his watch, for it was very long to him. And then one of the peculiar phenomena of jealousy developed in his consciousness; all sense of disappointment or sorrow, every trace of sentiment or even of self-interest disappeared from his mind, and naked curiosity reigned alone—reigned and raged like the hunger of a wild beast. He may be said to have forgotten even Eleanor herself in his desire for her secret.

He stared at the dying man on the floor. How much had *he* known? Something surely. Warren walked unsteadily to the door, and shot the bolt. Thus protected from intrusion, he searched Robinson's pockets; he pulled open the drawers of the desk and the table; he felt for papers in a score of suits of rich and florid fabrics; but he discovered only the most trivial and irrelevant documents, and very few even of these.

The futile search was quickly completed, and Warren went to the telephone on the desk, and reported to the police an ambulance case at that house, adding merely that it seemed to be a homicide. He knew that the case would not go to the Lawrence, but to the Flower Hospital, which has a public ambulance service. In all human probability he would never see Robinson alive again, but to this he was professionally indifferent. He would have worked over the man for an indefinite number of hours without rest if there had been the slightest chance of restoring him to consciousness; but there was none; he was no better than dead at that moment. He would never tell what Warren craved to know.

He called Andrew in from the hall, and prepared to go. The negro seemed scared, and very unwilling to remain in the room alone.

"What all'll I do here?" he asked, with a whine.

"Stay till the police come," said Warren, "and then tell the truth if you know how. Did you hear that name?"

"What Mr. Rob'nsn say? Yassah. Cliff Wainwright."

"Did you ever hear of him before?"

"No, sah; not me, never. Nor I don't know nothin' 'bout who done for Mr. Rob'nsn; nothin', nothin', nothin'——"

"Tell your story to the police," said the doctor, and turned on his heel.

He went out into the hall, and spoke privately with a woman whom he had marked among the prying crowd. She was the janitress of an adjoining house, and an authority on the private affairs of her neighbors, as Warren knew, for she had often been a clinic patient at the hospital. Asked if she had recognized the young man who had stood in the doorway, she said Yes. Where did he live? At this question the woman looked up sidelong with an unpleasant smile.

"Why didn't you ask your friend?" said she, after a moment's consideration.

"What do you mean?" demanded Warren—and his voice was thick.

"She could have told you," said the woman. "I've seen her go in there."

"In where?"

"The studio building across the way—the one with the yellow front," was the reply. "He's on the second floor, west; his name's Brown; a painter, as I hear. Maybe she's having her picture painted."

Warren fumbled in his pockets, and found no coins; but the woman must be paid. He opened Eleanor's bag, and paid his reckoning with some silver from that source. He was conscious of a slight confusion of his faculties; he looked at the woman steadily, and tried to rouse and to command his trained powers of observation. He was sensible of failure, yet it seemed that this creature would be capable of silence for a price.

"When you have anything to say, say it to me," he admonished her coldly. "Do you understand?"

"Yes, doctor," said the woman. "When I'm bought I stay so; I know who I'm working for."

"A woman of principle," said Warren. "I'll see you again."

He left her, and went to the hospital, where he locked Eleanor's bag in a drawer. He did not ask if she had returned; indeed, he spoke to no one. Out in the air again, he walked eastward to the studio building with the yellow front. In the vestibule, between the bell buttons and the slits of the letter boxes, were the names of the tenants, some on printed cards, others engraved on slips of metal, and one written in a constrained hand—"George Brown."

Warren had formed no definite plan, for the facts at his command were insufficient. He stood in the vestibule for several minutes, reviewing the mystery. A youth came in hastily with a letter in his hand; he wore a blue uniform, but not that of the district-messenger service. He scanned the names of the tenants till his eye fell upon Brown's; then he raised a finger to press the button.

"For Brown?" said the doctor, extending his hand. The messenger, after

a momentary hesitation, gave him a sealed envelope, and Warren tipped him with a piece of Eleanor's silver that had escaped the janitress.

"No answer," said he, for the youth was waiting.

Warren had been well schooled in early life to show the outward and visible signs of that inward and spiritual grace which constitutes a gentleman, and, despite his later metropolitan environment, he had in some degree preserved the habit. Certainly he had never before stolen another person's letter, and he felt unclean with the degradation of the act, but a frantic impatience overmastered him. He read the note so fast that he got no meaning from it, and was compelled to put the brakes upon his mind while he read it again:

DEAR GEORGE: There seems to be a way out of this. It's only a chance, but quite worth taking, in so tight a pinch. I can't explain; too risky, of course; but the point is that I'm going to meet this fellow's accusation with an alibi. He accuses me; I wasn't there. The peg, you understand. Don't say anything to contradict this view; caution the young lady, if she needs it. Keep cool, and lie low. We can probably arrange so that you won't figure at all, for the present. We fully appreciate what you have done.

CLIFF.

The substance of this note made no clear impression on Warren's excited mind. He knew that Eleanor was the young lady referred to, and he saw abundant evidence that the relation between her and the men who had robbed and murdered Robinson was close enough to be called a partnership. She must be cautioned "if she needed it." And the best plan that the author of this communication could devise to save himself and his associates was "only a chance." If Wainwright, the accused, had little faith in it, Warren had less; the whole truth would come out, and Eleanor's name and portrait would be as common in the city's streets as had been those of other pretty women made notorious by crimes.

It is probable that Warren desired her the more because of this. He beheld her disgraced; she had fallen from a great height; and yet he would have

married her that moment; he would have sold his goods and fled with her that night, had such an act been possible, without the sanction of church or state or his own conscience, without an explanation from her lips, or even with the worst imaginable confession ringing in his ears. And this from no nobility of devotion, but from uncontrollable passion, stimulated—as in certain natures it always will be—by the contact and atmosphere of evil.

His feeling in regard to Eleanor's relation to the crime and to the man known to him as George Brown had gone far beyond the tangible evidence, but he was unable to perceive this fact in direct view; he saw it indirectly when he tried to reason from the note which he had stolen to the actual degree of Brown's complicity. When he fixed his mind on this point the vagueness and inaccuracy of his information about the whole affair could not fail to appear. He was now walking westward along Fifty-fifth Street, and had passed beyond Eighth Avenue without aim. He retraced his steps as far as the avenue, and halted beside a bright window of a shop to examine the stolen letter again.

To his surprise, he saw the name of the Hotel St. Giles on a corner of the envelope. The lettering was very unobtrusive, but he could not understand why he had not noticed it before; and, warned by this indication of his excited state, he made a definite effort to attain calmness.

The message was written on a folded sheet of small size, the paper very good, and notably different from the material of the envelope. The top of the first page had been hastily torn off, as if upon an impulse of caution, and this Warren had noticed before, receiving thus, perhaps, the impression that there was no clew to the place from which the note had been sent. He now perceived that the bottoms of several letters were visible, where a name printed in red had been only half ripped away. They looked like S. S. *Kaianga*, apparently the name of a steamship, though Warren had never heard of such a

craft. The sum of his immediate inferences was that the writer of the note had recently made a voyage, and was now a guest of the Hotel St. Giles. As to the value of this information, or what good could accrue to himself from finding Robinson's assailant, Warren had no definite idea; nevertheless he promptly hailed a passing taxicab, and within ten minutes stood before the desk of the St. Giles, inquiring for Mr. Clifford Wainwright.

The clerk viewed him with an eye experienced in classifying men.

"Are you the doctor?" said he; and Warren nodded. The clerk addressed a buttoned minion: "Show this gentleman to five hundred and three."

To have been told that Mr. Wainwright was out, or even that he had never been in, and was unknown at the St. Giles would have occasioned Warren no surprise; but to be received as one whose coming had been anxiously awaited was a considerable shock to an overstrained mind. The doctor held his tongue, however, and followed the bell boy to the elevator.

Various theories ran through his mind as the car ascended to the fifth floor; memory of the revolver in Robinson's room flashed back upon him. It was the man's own weapon, and might have been discharged in his defense. If Wainwright had been wounded, his doom was doubly sealed, for his injury would confirm the evidence of the spoken name. Warren hoped against this conjecture; he would rather that the case were not so plain for the police; he would like to hold the issue of it in his own hand, so that he might have the greater power over Eleanor.

At the door of room 503 the boy touched the button of a bell, and a voice that sounded distant cried "Come in!" Warren entered a small sitting room, and found nobody there; but in an adjoining chamber was a man lying against some pillows on a bed, and writing an address on an envelope, which he sealed and put out of sight as Warren advanced. His visible attire consisted chiefly of a blue bath robe, tied by a cord at the waist. Upon his left foot

were a stocking and slipper, but the toes of the other foot were bare, protruding from the folds of a towel wrapped around the ankle. This must be "the peg," thought Warren, and did not doubt that he should find a gunshot wound.

Meanwhile, he was conscious of a dim sense of recognition, coupled with a feeling of the lapse of years. He might have said to himself: "I have seen this man before, but it was quite a while ago, and he has changed."

He seemed about Warren's own age, a very large, strong man, with a rough-hewn face of good outlines and of the Anglo-Saxon type and coloring, except that the eyebrows were too dark and heavy. He was somewhat disfigured by a peculiar baldness, having the effect of a tonsure. Above his forehead there was a thin ribbon of reddish yellow hair, and it was abundant at the sides and back of his head, but all his crown was naked as a doorknob. The doctor would have hazarded a guess that this affliction had come recently, and might have been prevented. It must have greatly changed the man, and might account for the failure of one who had known him slightly several years ago to recognize him now.

"Good evening, doctor," said he. "I suppose you got my message?"

Warren was not disposed to lose this opportunity for any scruple.

"I received some sort of message," he replied. "Are you Mr. Clifford Wainwright?"

"I am."

"There can hardly be another gentleman of that name at the St. Giles?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's quite a common name," Wainwright responded.

This seemed to be a defensive answer, though there was nothing to indicate that Wainwright suspected the doctor of being the advance guard of his accusers. Doubtless he had nerved himself to hold a certain line of action, and to shape every word to fit the needs of his desperate situation. His remark certainly implied that he knew how meager Robinson's accusation had been, consisting of little except the name. Yet

who but Eleanor could have told him this? Brown, perhaps. Though he had closed the door between himself and the dying man before Robinson had spoken Wainwright's name, it was possible he might have heard it, or Warren's more distinct repetition of it. Be this as it might, there was no doubt that Warren had found the right man, for on the bed were many bits of paper, the remains of a rejected draft of the letter which he had just sealed up, and though the scattered words conveyed no meaning the penmanship disclosed itself plainly enough, and it was unmistakably the same as that of the stolen note in the doctor's pocket.

"I've sprained my ankle," said Wainwright; "and rather badly, I'm afraid."

"Sprained it?" said Warren. "Where did this happen?"

"At the foot of the stairs out there, and it laid me flat. I just had to bellow for my brother—his room's on the floor above. Couldn't walk at all; he had to carry a good half of me, and that's no small load; but we got back here somehow, and Henry looked at my ankle. He's a sort of a doctor, but he said he'd like to have a real one when it was a case of crippling an only brother. I agreed with him—naturally—and we called for the physician of the house, but he was out, and we couldn't learn just when he was coming back. So after a bit of an argument with the clerk we picked a doctor out of the telephone book, and called his number. He wasn't in, either, but he seemed to have an associate—yourself, I suppose."

Warren kept steady, but he was thinking thirteen to the dozen.

"What time did you give this call?" he asked.

"Half after six," answered Wainwright very promptly.

"Half past six," said Warren, veiling his perplexity; "and that was some time after your accident?"

"Near thirty minutes. It was just six when I left this room to go to my brother's."

If the man was telling a falsehood concocted as a desperate expedient to save his life, he was certainly doing it

well. He showed no readable signs of excitement; he had erred only in being a trifle too ready with his story, and too precise in his statements of time. That his ankle had been sprained in the leap from the fire escape at Robinson's lodgings seemed a practical certainty, but this could not have occurred at six o'clock. It was between twenty and twenty-five minutes past seven when the negro janitor had been assailed by the escaping murderer. Robinson's wound, to judge by its appearance, might have been inflicted a half hour earlier—surely not more.

The intervening time had doubtless been spent in finding the booty in its hiding place under the hearth, and partly, perhaps, in an attempt to open the box which had ultimately been carried away. But the minutes spent in the room were not to be reckoned in the matter of Wainwright's ankle, which had been hurt in his flight, the time of which was fixed by the raising of the alarm. Yet it seemed absurd to suppose that Wainwright's story of having called a doctor at half past six was a flat lie; the man could not help knowing that the telephone record at the switchboard downstairs would contradict him.

In the dilemma thus created, Warren decided to take the evidence of the injured ankle, though such a proceeding might not be strictly in accord with professional etiquette.

"It is doubtful that I am the physician you intended to call," said he; "but since I am here, and you seem to be in pain—"

"Well, rather!" responded Wainwright. "You can't begin too soon, if you ask me."

Accordingly the doctor removed the towel, which was wet with liniment, and disclosed an ankle very much swollen and discolored. Its appearance was a considerable surprise to him, for he had suspected that his patient was attempting to make the most of a slight accident.

Warren was a good surgeon, and every consideration impelled him to the exercise of all his skill; yet when he

had ended his examination he was not sure as to the nature of the injury; but this doubt resulted from knowledge, not from ignorance. Whether there was a fracture here he could not tell, but upon the more important question of Wainwright's guilt or innocence he was prepared to stake his professional reputation. For he was willing to swear that the foot had been immediately and completely disabled, that the ligaments which bind and stay the ankle had been so torn from their fastenings as to be useless for support.

No exercise of muscular strength could have held the foot steady afterward, no effort of the will have enabled Wainwright to walk upon it. He must have fallen in a heap instantly, and if he had moved, unaided, from the spot it would have been on one leg, or his hands and knees. If he had met with this accident in leaping from the fire balcony outside Robinson's window he could not have grappled with the janitor, nor have escaped from the scene, nor have returned to the St. Giles without attracting the attention of many persons.

Moreover, the present condition of the ankle would not permit of the conclusion that it had been injured at a later hour than half past six—probably about fifty minutes before the crime. The time set by Wainwright himself was probably the true one. Taking all things together, Warren saw that a physical impossibility intervened between Clifford Wainwright and the deed of which he stood accused.

CHAPTER V.

The voice of the patient interrupted Warren's speculations:

"I say, doctor, what do you think of it? Looks bad, eh?"

"It may give you some trouble for a while," responded Warren, with approved professional vagueness. "Did you fall down the stairs?"

"No; I just stumbled at the bottom, and my foot turned under me. I'm rather a heavy man, you see."

"Yes," said the doctor thoughtfully, "I see."

"If you need adhesive bandage, here's a roll of it." And Wainwright glanced to where it lay on the stand beside the bed.

"Yes, possibly," said Warren. "Where did you get it?"

"My brother went out and bought it."

Dim suspicions in Warren's mind took clearer outlines. There are sometimes very strong resemblances between brothers—strong enough to deceive even a man who has known one of them ever since he was a child.

"At what time was this?" he asked.

"I don't know exactly," answered Wainwright. "Nearly seven, I should think. It was after we got tired of waiting for a doctor."

His former overready precision about time was lacking now. Obviously this matter was not worth lying about, and Warren gladly drew the plain inference. Still, he was impatient to see the brother.

"Where is he now?" he asked.

"My brother? Really I don't know. He went up to his room a moment before you came. He should be back by now."

"If he were here," said the doctor, "I would tell him what to do for you while I am gone. Perhaps you could call him?"

Wainwright weighed this suggestion with a tense caution which he could not quite conceal. In the end he took the telephone from the little table by the bed, somewhat as if it were a loaded gun coming muzzle foremost, and asked for communication with room 626. The operator could not get an answer to the call. It seemed that Wainwright was surprised, and that he was both alarmed and puzzled by his brother's absence.

"Henry will be here soon," said he, as if for his own encouragement.

Warren thought this probable, and he would have liked to wait, but he was now exceedingly anxious to find out what had become of Eleanor. He decided to return to the hospital, hoping

to find her there; he would see the injured woman also, and question her.

"Mr. Wainwright," said he, "I'm going to put this ankle of yours in plaster. I'll make a cast like a boot, and then split it up the middle, so that it can be taken off for treatment."

"Do you suspect a fracture?" Wainwright asked.

Warren was silent some moments, and then answered, "No."

Wainwright seemed greatly relieved, and he preserved a cheerful demeanor while the doctor took such measures as were necessary before leaving the patient to himself.

In the corridor, not far from the door of 503, a large, plump man was sitting in an open window that looked out on the central court. His hands were folded upon his stomach, and the expression of his countenance indicated that he had just eaten a full dinner, and was pleasantly digesting it. He rolled a brown eye toward Warren, and said softly: "Ah, doctor, good evening!"

Warren had never seen the man out of uniform before, but at the voice he knew him for Police Captain Steinfeldt, now acting as an inspector, and having his headquarters at the West Forty-seventh Street station. The question of his own attitude toward the police was thus suddenly raised: How could he best hold his own secrets and get theirs? He halted a pace or two from the captain, and muttered something that might pass for "Good evening."

"Robinson's dead," said Steinfeldt. He hitched up his shoulders, sighed, and smiled. "I've just heard from the Flower. He didn't come to. Died without a peep."

"Without speaking? Yes, I thought so," said Warren. "Did you know him?"

"I sure did," answered the captain. "No record, though," he added; "just a spender. Where he got it I don't know; but he had it—for the birds."

"So I supposed," said Warren.

"I've been to the Fifty-fifth Street house," Steinfeldt continued. "The janitor gave me this man's name." He

pointed to the door of 503. "How did you locate him so quick?"

"I was called professionally," said Warren.

Steinfeldt raised his shoulders, and spread abroad his hands, this action being equivalent to the remark that all men are liars, and that as they were so created it is probably all right.

"What's the matter with him?" he inquired. "Shot?"

Warren shook his head.

"Empty shell in Robinson's gun," said the captain. "Might not have been fired, at that. Still, if I could find a man who had been nicked by a bullet — What do you think of that mark on the coon?"

"On the janitor? A scratch," said Warren.

"When a bullet comes near enough to a man's face to scratch him, it leaves a kind of a black mark; but how's anybody going to find it on Andrew? If he'd been shot with a piece of chalk it might help some. I guess the gun wasn't fired."

"It wouldn't have hit my patient if it had been," said the doctor. "He wasn't there."

"How do you know?"

Warren stated the facts. Steinfeldt's face as he listened might have indicated that the dinner aforesaid had begun to disagree with him.

"Now, doctor," said he, in that disgusted tone used by New Yorkers when they bargain, "what kind of a fake is this? Of course, you're on the level, but this fellow's throwing you some way. Ain't that right?"

"No," said Warren, "and you may as well make up your mind to it. He is not the man."

"Then who is?"

"I don't know. It's nothing to me, of course. I hear that Wainwright has a brother, Henry, who is here. If there's any resemblance between them it—"

At this the captain's indigestion became so very much worse, to judge by his expression, that Warren stopped short.

"Them two men look about as much alike as you and me," said Steinfeldt, turning away from Warren, as if it were painful to look at such a foolish person. "Resemblance nothing! I saw them both last night. What's the explanation of this? Was Robinson stringing you?"

"No," said Warren. "He meant to tell the truth."

"At that he might have had a motive, you know."

"He was pretty well done with motives. He knew he was dying."

"Well, he wasn't dead yet, was he?" retorted the captain. "And while a man's alive he's got motives, hasn't he? You can't be alive and not want something, can you?"

"I think he was mistaken," said Warren. "The room wasn't very light."

"It couldn't have been dark enough to make one of these Wainwrights look like the other," said Steinfeldt. "You'll see for yourself in a minute if you wait."

"I shall see Henry? Where is he now?"

"Outside the tea-room entrance, talking to a woman in a taxi. Any idea who she can be?"

"No," said Warren; but he had a very distinct idea, and felt the heat of it in his temples.

"We shall have some kind of a description," said the captain. "I've got a man down there. The woman's veiled, of course, but I guess we can get her if we want her. Steady! Here he is."

The most commonplace of average men had suddenly appeared in the corridor; he passed them, going toward room 503.

"Can that be Wainwright's brother?" Warren whispered.

Steinfeldt laughed. "Watch him go round the corner," said he. "That's *my* man, the shadow. Sometimes we follow ahead of 'em, and sometimes we follow behind 'em," he condescended to explain. "Our party isn't far away."

The sound of a quick, light step on a stairway from the floor above made Warren face about, and he saw a man descending—a man extremely different

from Clifford Wainwright in appearance, yet possible as his brother. Something in the eyes, something in the quality and manner, constituted what is called a family resemblance; but the question whether one of these brothers could be mistaken for the other was set instantly aside by their great variance in bulk.

The doctor would have estimated Clifford's height at six feet two, and his square and powerful shoulders could not fail to give full value to his stature; but Henry hardly topped the poor average of men, and was built with a kind of nicety that made him look small. Clifford was smooth shaven; Henry wore a reddish-brown mustache and scanty beard. He was far from insignificant in appearance, yet he reminded Warren of a person who had been so in fact—an English country doctor who had bored him for seven days on an Atlantic liner; there was the same look of constant anxiety, and of that simple goodness of heart which is the least eminent of the virtues. No one could blame the man for being anxious under the circumstances, but the expression seemed habitual.

"Very much the country doctor before they learned to shave—if they have yet," was Warren's inward comment, as Henry Wainwright came along the corridor.

He walked with a nervous hurry; he seemed startled by the sight of the two men at the window, and when he reached his brother's door he roused his spirit with a visible effort before entering.

"Cliff, old boy," they heard him call cheerily, "did you think I had deserted you? How's the peg?"

The door closed behind him. Captain Steinfeldt uttered a sound between a sniff and a grunt.

"What do you think of him?" he asked.

Warren was not thinking of him at all, but of some one who was big enough to be mistaken for Clifford Wainwright. Upon this subject he was not prepared to speak; he shook his head, and turned away.

Steinfeldt hooked his arm with a hairy finger.

"Now, look here, doctor," said he, "you've got an idea about this case. It's written all over you. But you say you've got no personal interest."

"None whatever," answered Warren.

"I may be able to do you a favor here," said Steinfeldt, as if the doctor's answer had been precisely the reverse. "Why don't you make a friend of me? You don't want anything that would jolt my feelings—a man like you."

"What I want," said Warren, "is to keep out of this. Tell me—what are you going to do here—arrest Wainwright?"

"How can I arrest him if he was lying on his back in this house when the trick was turned? After what you've told me, I don't dare to arrest him, and I don't think it's the thing to do. I'm going to talk with him, and give him the story straight, and see what he says."

"I shall be gone a few minutes—perhaps twenty," said Warren. "Will you wait till I come back? Your man can't run away."

"Take your time," replied the captain. "I'd like to have you present."

He leaned back against the window casing with a sigh as Warren walked away toward the elevator.

Broadway was seething, whirring, and exhaling gasoline at a great rate when Warren's cab came to it, and there was some delay on the near bank of that wild stream. Once over, he looked ahead, and saw Eleanor entering the hospital. She had something across her arm that seemed to be a rain-coat, and this trifling detail stuck in the doctor's mind despite the multitude of thoughts and images that struggled for attention. There was no vehicle in sight; Eleanor must have come the last part of the way afoot, and yet she had not covered her pretty new dress from the sprinkle of rain that was falling.

An attendant sat on guard in the hall.

"That was Miss Perry who just came in?" said Warren.

"Yes, sir," replied the man; and by a gesture he indicated that she had

turned to the left from the hall instead of ascending the main stairway at the right. Warren took the same course along the transverse corridor, past the office, and to the elevator, where he found the person in charge of it sitting within the car.

"Did you take Miss Perry up?" asked the doctor; but the man had not seen her; he was sure that she had not gone up the stairs that encircled the shaft.

Warren retraced his steps, and looked into the office, the only room which was open and lighted along that corridor. No one was there except old Jacob Massinger, in his shiny alpaca coat, at work on the accounts.

"Doctor Warren," said he, "good evening. There is a subject I would like to speak to you about if you could spare a very few moments. Those two officers were here just now—the ones who brought in the accident case this afternoon; the woman who would give no name."

This was one of the few themes which would have commanded any of Warren's time; he walked in and to the desk.

"Well," said he, "what did they want?"

Massinger, with his slow precision, wasted a good three minutes in telling how the officers had come to get a description of the bag which had been stolen. After taking advice, he had given them such particulars as he could gather. He hoped there was no objection.

"What are their names?" said Warren, and was forced to wait while the old man copied them on a slip of paper. "Did you see Miss Perry pass the door just now?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "half a minute before you came in, and again since we have been speaking together." Warren swore between his teeth. "I think she must have meant to go out, sir," Massinger said. "She wore a coat, I observed."

Warren hurried to the outer door. Eleanor had passed the sentry, and was nowhere to be seen.

Mentally consigning Massinger to the

pit of perdition, Warren went again to the elevator, and received the same answer as before from the person at that post of duty. The shaft was set in a jog, and the man in the car could see only so much of the corridor as was directly in front of him; but he was sure that Miss Perry had not come within his range of vision. Where had she been during her three minutes' stay in the building? There were but two doors on the corridor between the office and the elevator, and one of them Warren knew to be locked, while the other opened into a private room of his own. This was a dismal, inconvenient den which he very rarely used, and would long since have given up except that he could never find the time to dig out of its accumulated rubbish the few things that he cared to save. What could have induced Eleanor to enter that room was beyond Warren's power to guess, but upon an impulse which seemed foolish he himself went in, and turned the lights on, and looked around for any trace of her.

There was an old match safe on the table, for the doctor sometimes smoked in this room. The thing attracted his notice; some of the matches had been spilled, and he did not remember to have done this. It was possible that Eleanor had needed a little light, and had not dared to kindle the electric lamps. He looked keenly round for the charred end of a match, and saw it lying on the floor near the wall. Directly above it was the door of a cupboard which may have been designed to serve as a poison closet. It was unused, and had long been empty. Warren looked up from the match to the door, and, being a man of his eyes, he noticed instantly that it was tightly closed, whereas the free side usually projected an inch or more. It was now locked, and the key was gone.

A surgeon should be a handy man with tools. Two pairs of pincers and a bit of stiff wire served Warren well enough in his present need, and the cupboard's lock was easily picked. On a shelf stood a black metal cash box, of a better quality and heavier than the

common sort. Warren shook it; the contents gave forth no sound, and seemed to add little to the weight; but he could tell that the box was not empty. He carried it to the middle of the room, where there was a better light, and saw scratched on the cover with some very hard point the name "J. Robinson."

There could be no doubt that Eleanor had brought this to the hospital hidden by the raincoat across her arm, and had been afraid to risk discovery on the stairs or in the elevator on the way to her own room. She had chosen a good hiding place; Warren could not have named a better, and he knew that the chances had been ten thousand to one against the finding of this treasure. But he had found it, and the key of the whole mystery lay almost certainly under his hand.

He stood for half a minute thinking swiftly toward a plan. What he desired was that Eleanor should be forced into something like a confession. If she should come back for the box and find it gone, she might guess that Warren had taken it, yet not be sure. If he told her, she might deny all knowledge of the matter despite any assurances he could give. But if he could raise a doubt in her mind—could make her uncertain whether the spoil had been taken—she might prefer to learn the truth even at the cost of some disclosures.

He wrapped the box in flannel; disguising its shape, and bringing it to such a size that it fitted tightly into an end of a suit case that happened to be in the room. This he hid well enough to be safe while he went out to get the materials for Wainwright's splint. Returning, he made a quick-drying mixture with a bit of the plaster, fastened the cupboard door again, and filled the cavity of the lock as if it had been a tooth, leaving the keyhole clear and the exterior surface clean. In a few minutes the filling would set hard enough so that the key could not be turned, and to dig a path for it would be a task for a locksmith. Eleanor would not dare to open the door with violence, for the

noise would be heard. No one would dare do it without his orders; the girl would have to come to him.

Warren had meant to question the woman with the dislocated neck, but the time did not suffice; he could not afford to miss the encounter between Steinfeldt and the Wainwrights. He put the materials for the splint into the unoccupied end of the suit case—the black box being in the other—and hurried away to the St. Giles.

It gratified a kind of sensual cruelty in him to think of Eleanor's torture when she should try to open the door of the old poison cupboard and fail. He had an evil pleasure also in the recklessness of the thing he was now doing—carrying the booty in the Robinson murder thus secretly into the presence of the accused and of the police.

CHAPTER VI.

Captain Steinfeldt was seated in the window, exactly as at first, except that he was now fanning himself with his hat.

"Now, captain," said Warren, "I'm ready to dress this man's ankle; and I understand that you intend to question him at the same time. I hope you don't expect to use me as a witness?"

"No, no—nothing like that," said Steinfeldt. "If this case ever amounts to anything you'll be an expert for the defense. There's where the money is, and you ought to have it. You've got next to these people, and their money belongs to you; it don't belong to me. That's the way I look at it."

"Well," said Warren, "shall we go in?"

Steinfeldt turned the light of his countenance aside as a sign of contempt for an inferior brain.

"We don't want this to look like any frame-up," he said. "Henry Wainwright has seen us together once; we won't rub it in. Go on. I'll give you three minutes' start."

Warren turned to go, but the captain checked him.

"Perhaps we'd better run through that dying statement," he said. "I got

it from Andrew, and it's probably straight. Here's the statement as Andrew gave it to me."

He repeated it with remarkable accuracy, omitting nothing which seemed important—nothing at all, in fact, except Robinson's confused reference to a goose and a golden egg. Warren made no corrections.

"You have it right enough," he said. "My testimony and Andrew's will be found to agree."

"Very good," returned Steinfeldt. "That's all. On your way, doctor."

Warren went accordingly to the door of 503, and rang the bell, and was received by Henry Wainwright with an amiable and easy courtesy too thoroughly grained in the man's nature to be altered, even by the stress of the present situation. He seemed to have a strong affection for his big brother, and to be very much worried about the result of the accident; but no one could have guessed without a clew that anything more important than Clifford's ankle was at stake. Yet there could be no doubt that both the brothers were now thoroughly informed about the murder, however small their own direct share in it might have been.

Warren felt sure that Eleanor was the woman in the cab mentioned by Steinfeldt, and that she had told Henry whatever he did not already know about the crime and the accusation. The stolen note proved that Clifford had heard some part of the truth at an earlier moment, though by what means was still to be discovered. Eleanor might have telephoned, but Warren shrewdly guessed that it was Brown who had sent the first warning, and that Clifford's phrase, "We fully appreciate what you have done," referred to this message.

But there were many things which Brown could not have known at that time, among them being the most important fact of all—the fatal nature of Robinson's injury. Not a single detail of the crime had been disclosed while Brown stood listening, and the door was closed and the listener gone before Robinson made his meager and uncer-

tain statement about the murderer's having come in by the window, and about the theft of the box. Unless the Wainwrights had received some communication from the murderer himself, they must have got these facts from Eleanor or be still in ignorance of them, and Warren well knew that they were not. Therefore, if these men were parties to the conspiracy which had cost Robinson his life, Eleanor was now certainly involved as an accomplice. Her connection both before and after the crime could doubtless be shown, and under the law her guilt was equal to that of the principal. She stood in peril of death.

As Warren had aspired to be her lover, it was his duty to shield her, no matter what she had done. He had now three minutes' time to act in her defense, and to force the Wainwrights to protect her by silence or by falsehood, whichever would best serve; but he could not summon the power to begin. He was aware, in a small, clean corner of his soul, of what he ought to do; but there was a serpent within him that poisoned him to a kind of enmity toward Eleanor and to a relish for the worst. The interval before Steinfeldt's coming slipped away while Warren sat incapable, hearing his own voice droning about plaster splints.

Captain Steinfeldt had decided upon an open policy, feeling that he lacked material for artifice and traps. He introduced himself in one brief sentence, and immediately began a statement of the Robinson case, in the course of which he did not pause for comment or question from his hearers.

"Now, Mr. Wainwright," he concluded, addressing the unfortunate cripple, "it's up to you. You're the party named. What have you got to say?"

"Why, simply that I'm astounded," was the reply. "I never heard of this man in all my life. \ He couldn't have meant me. There's another Clifford Wainwright, I suppose—it's not such an odd name. Why did you pick me out? How did you find me?"

"This ain't Russia, nor it ain't Paris," responded the captain; "but we know

who lives here, and who comes and goes. You hadn't been in this hotel two hours before I had your name."

"Then you must be aware that I've been here only since yesterday, and that I'm altogether a stranger. I haven't a single acquaintance in New York."

"Your brother has," said the captain, wheeling toward Henry. "Who were you talking with just now—the woman in the cab outside?"

"Well, really, you know," responded Henry, "I hardly think we're justified in bringing a lady's name into an affair of this kind. I'd rather not answer, if you don't mind."

At this the captain began to bluster a bit, quite without effect, for the brothers were unmoved. They stood firm upon the line of defense which they had evidently decided to hold at all hazards and against all assaults. Their plan was a general denial; they knew nothing about the man Robinson, his life, his death, his friends, or his enemies.

"But this man said he was your father's coachman, and knew both of you well," said Steinfeldt. "I suppose you'll tell me that your father never had a coachman."

"He certainly had one," responded Clifford; "but the fellow has been dead six years. My brother and I have never employed anybody in that capacity. We have driven our own horses."

Then, in response to further questions, the brothers spoke with apparent freedom of their affairs and their history. They were natives of New Zealand; their home was in Christchurch, on the Avon River, where they had lived since boyhood, and where of late years they had been in business, succeeding their father at his death. Recently they had closed out their interests, with the intention of removing to England. They had sailed from Wellington on the steamer *Katanga*, had stayed for about a week in San Francisco, and had arrived in New York yesterday morning.

The name of the steamer which Warren had partially deciphered on the note from Clifford to Brown was a point in

confirmation of this story, and he was not disposed to doubt any of it except that which he certainly knew to be false—the denial of all interest in the crime and all knowledge of the victim. He wondered that these men had told so much of the truth, and then he be-thought him that they were constrained to do so by the fact that they were correctly registered on the ledger of the St. Giles, their names, and their home city. Clifford made a point of this.

"We are strangers here," he said. "We might have taken any names. Why should we have used our own if we had come to carry out a scheme of murder? And will you pretend that we have had the time to hatch one up since we have been here?"

It was a hard question; it seemed to make Steinfeldt severely seasick. He walked to the open window, and the gentle Henry viewed him with an anxious eye, saying that it was indeed an oppressive night and that he himself felt ill.

"Go on, and fix that feller's foot," growled Steinfeldt to Warren over his shoulder; and he continued to look out upon the steaming city all the time that Warren worked to adjust the splint. When this had been done, Steinfeldt made a sort of final address to the brothers.

"You men are making a mistake," he said. "I know for certain that you are in this affair somewhere. I advise you to talk up now, and tell a story that'll stand investigation."

Clifford Wainwright declined to amend his statement, and Steinfeldt accepted the situation without further words. At the captain's request, Henry Wainwright went with him and Warren to the Flower Hospital, and looked upon the face of the dead. The gentle brother's usual manner admirably fitted him for such an ordeal; his sympathetic distress, which seemed to feed upon the sorrows of the world, was no more noticeable in the presence of Robinson's clay than elsewhere.

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!" said he. "No, I have never seen him."

Steinfeldt, who had been watching

with the moist brown eyes of a hungry dog, growled audibly, because he had got nothing out of it; but Warren was in doubt; it seemed to him that he had detected signs of recognition. He made a note of it, and held his tongue.

On the return they made a detour through Fifty-fifth Street to Robinson's lodgings, Steinfeldt having ordered his cabman to stop at the wrong house so that Henry might betray his knowledge of the place if he had any. The experiment failed, however, and the captain relieved his feelings by feigning disgust at the stupidity of the cabby, who dared not even smile.

All this time Doctor Warren had been carrying the suit case containing what he surely believed to be the spoils taken from Robinson. It had stood open in the Wainwrights' room; it had bumped Captain Steinfeldt's shins in the cab, and now in the murdered man's apartments Warren set it down on the hearth within six inches of the hiding place from which the black box had been stolen. The atmosphere of that room, its gaudiness, its expensive vulgarity, seemed to stimulate Warren's curiosity; he burned to be at home that he might open the box and see the plunder which for a time was his. He was glad, therefore, that the captain stayed only long enough to assure himself that the spot where the crime had been committed exercised no perceptible influence on Henry Wainwright.

Warren lived on Fifty-fourth Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. He paid an extravagant rental for the second floor, and a living suite above, in one of the foolish old residential houses of the region. When the captain's cab set the doctor down at his door he saw a straggling group extending from the curbstone to the threshold—reporters, as he knew at a glance. Doubtless they had been arriving one by one during the last half hour, and none had dared to enter lest a rival on the doorstep should beguile the doctor away.

Long experience had steeled Warren against the interviewer; he had expected these visitors, and had prepared a story for them. "Come in, gentlemen,"

said he; and led the way, to save time—a form of courtesy which a good reporter always appreciates.

On the second floor there was a circular hall, with a large reception room at the front, and to this he had intended to conduct the inquisitors; but the folding doors were closed, and his nurse, Miss Hammond, sat near them, reading a book, as if that were her usual post of duty. Warren, seeing her so placed, knew instantly that there was some one in the reception room whose presence must not be discovered by the reporters.

"Any telephone calls?" asked the doctor.

"Two-five-sixteen called at half past nine," answered the nurse. "Just before these gentlemen began to arrive," she added, with a smile.

This was a familiar bit of trickery. Two-five-sixteen had nothing to do with telephone numbers; it meant a woman whose initials were the fifth and the sixteenth letters of the alphabet. E. P.; it was Eleanor Perry who was now behind the closed doors, and she had come safely ahead of the reporters.

Warren turned toward the rear of the hall as if that had been his original intention, and, having touched a button which gave current to the lights in his consulting room, he walked briskly in, and took his usual chair. He was grimly pleased to set the suit case beside him on a taboret, where it would be especially conspicuous, as he excitedly imagined. It was not really conspicuous, of course, to any one except himself. His visitors gave it barely a glance, for to them it was of no more importance than a figure on the wall paper; but it exercised a constantly increasing fascination upon Warren, whose curiosity rose to an almost unbearable intensity.

It appeared that the reporters were interested in the general story and in three special points: Robinson's dying statement, the exact nature of Wainwright's injury, and the explanation of the strange circumstance that the same doctor had attended both men. They knew that Miss Perry had been with Warren when the crime was discovered,

but did not connect her otherwise with the case. They had heard of the woman in the cab at the St. Giles, but seemed not to suspect that it was Eleanor.

While covertly questioning his visitors, Warren told his own story with a nice assumption of frankness and personal indifference, omitting such details as he judged his hearers would not miss, and upon the whole confining himself to facts which would assuredly be gleaned from other sources. As to the dangerous point—the mythical summons to attend Wainwright—he said that he had come home from Robinson's rooms after reporting the case to the police, and had then found the call in the form of the usual memorandum, made by Miss Hammond. She had received the message by telephone, and had naturally supposed that some one at the St. Giles was speaking.

Warren told this tale with confidence because he had signaled to Miss Hammond in the hall that she should overhear the conversation; and he reposed full trust in her as a woman whose conscience would not quarrel with her salary.

The reporters had no reason to doubt this story; they could not see through Warren's coat, and read the intercepted letter in his pocket. He was not afraid of them; he suffered only from impatience, but this became a positive torture. To learn why Eleanor had come, and to see the treasure he had stolen from the thieves—these were the hunger and thirst wherewith he was tormented. And it was not because he knew the spoil must be of great intrinsic value that he craved a sight of it, but because he believed that he would find Eleanor's secret there, and the power to control her. The ordeal for this reason seemed interminable; at times he could have leaped from his chair to drive these men out of the house with blows and curses; and when he actually closed the street door behind the back of the last of them his knees were shaking under him, and he went up the stairs with the unsteady gait of an old man.

Miss Hammond was in the upper

hall, putting on her hat. Warren pointed to the closed doors. "This must not be mentioned," said he. The nurse carefully inserted a hatpin while holding another in her mouth. "No, sir," said she.

"You heard what I told those reporters? You will be questioned about it."

"All right. I know what to say. Is there anything more?"

"I think not. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

And this perfect product of the times, who was willing to perjure herself in a case of murder as a part of her regular duties, and without even asking why, calmly adjusted the other hatpin, gave one last critical glance to her image in the mirror, and set forth toward home and her repose.

Warren remained for a few seconds in the circular hall, alone, collecting his thoughts, and letting the echoes of many voices and the quivering strain of personal contention die away within him. "I must have the facts before I see her," he said to himself at last. "I must know what is back of this."

He went to his consulting room, shut himself securely in, and drew all the curtains close. Then he took the metal box out of the suit case and removed its wrappings of flannel. The lock was modern, and promised to be difficult; doubtless he would have to break it; but while he was testing it with a bent wire there was a click, and the thing was done.

He threw back the lid, and stood staring while his heart thumped out the seconds. The box seemed full of money, so full that the contents had lifted itself a little when the pressure of the lid was removed. On top lay two packets, side by side, each surrounded by a strip of brown paper, on which was written "100 M"—one hundred thousand dollars.

Warren took them out, and three others like them—half a million in new bills of a thousand dollars. There remained many rolls of smaller bills which had wedged the five packets in, or lain beneath them. The whole contents of the box was money; the total

sum probably approaching five hundred and fifty thousand.

Wild thoughts ran in Warren's mind. This great sum of money cried out to him, appealing to the greed he had so long and studiously cultivated. Now that he had it in his hands, could he not use it to separate Eleanor from her confederates in the plot? A wave of disappointed jealousy went over him that he had found no written clew to the girl's secret. His knowledge of similar cases pointed constantly to the conclusion that some woman had betrayed to the thieves the facts about Robinson's amazing hoard; but if it were Eleanor who had done this why had Robinson not known her when he was dying of his wound?

It was not possible to explain her possession of the booty upon any theory of her complete innocence, but she might be no worse than a misguided girl who loved a rascal, and would sell her own life and soul to protect him. Yet, knowing her as he did, and recalling

many little mysteries of her conduct during a considerable period—above all, remembering that she had shown no adequate shock at the atrocity of the crime, and no right feeling about the punishment of the guilty, Warren was forced to conclude that she had been a party to the plot from an early stage. Doubtless it had been some while maturing, and Warren raged at the thought of all these weeks that he had been completely blind, while Eleanor, ensnared by a scoundrel, had been sinking deeper and deeper toward the level where this crime revealed her.

Warren's face was almost purple, and the blood throbbed in his temples. With hands drenched in his sweat, and trembling with his rage, he crushed the money back into the box, which he locked in his own safe.

"Now," said he, striding unevenly toward the hall, "I'm going to know why that girl is a thief. I'm going to find out who made her one, and send him to his death!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second part of this story will appear in the first August POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, July 7th.



SOMETHING HALE DID NOT KNOW

ON one of the trips taken by Philander Chase Knox to Central America, William Bayard Hale was an enthusiastic and interested member of the party. As is always the case on shipboard, the crowd discussed all possible topics.

One day a newspaper man asked Mr. Hale this question:

"Did you know that there was a law in England forbidding a man to marry his widow's sister?"

"No," said Mr. Hale solemnly. "When I was in England, there was no such law as that."

And he doesn't know yet.



LIMBS FROM THE LIMBO OF THE PAST

WHEN Governor Sulzer, of New York, took part in the debate at the National Press Club last December on the question, "Resolved, that bowlegs are a greater menace to navigation than knock-knees," he championed bowlegs. To uphold his argument, he declared in great heat that Socrates, Moses, and Alexander the Great had all been bow-legged.

And, as an evidence of how poorly developed is the sense of humor of some people, a man sent to a Washington newspaper the next day a long letter bawling out Sulzer, and declaring that the legs of all three of these great men had been straight, supple, and symmetrical.

Blacklisted

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Crab," "A Pennant and a Penance," Etc.

Being the plain statement of Waldo K. Biggs, late member of the pitching staff of the Bellingham Blues, lying at present under the official displeasure of organized baseball.

I AIN'T much of a hand to hunt for trouble, and never was; you can ask anybody that knows me, and they'll tell you the same. Still, there's times when a man ought to come out in the open and declare himself, and this is one of 'em.

I hate a kicker on general principles, but it's a pretty poor shoat that won't holler when he's got a real holler coming—and I have.

When I do a thing, and it turns out wrong, I'll shoulder the consequences, and not try to sneak behind the other fellow. I ain't got a bit of use on earth for a liar, and indirectly I always aim to tell the truth, but I won't stand to be no man's scapegoat—I ain't built that way.

Some of the folks here in Templeton think I ought to write to the National Commission, and give 'em Ike Small's number. I've thought it over, but what would be the use? A ball player has got as much chance to win out over his manager as he would have to sue the Beef Trust and get a supreme-court decision over them robbers. That's what the National Commission is for.

But if I can't put my side of the case before the National Commission I can get it before the public, and that's why I'm writing this piece. I want justice,

I do. I've been Ike Small's goat long enough, and it's time the Bellingham folks found out about the mistake they made last fall—the time I had the pennant almost grabbed for 'em.

I'm a pitcher—a good pitcher, and I'll leave it to anybody that ever saw me work. My name is in the record books for last season—"Biggs, games won, 28; games lost, 12; percentage, .700." Take it from me, there's plenty of big leaguers that don't get no such figures as that after their names! And most of them losing games were simply kicked away behind me—thrown away. If I'd had decent support, I'd have set a record for 'em all to shoot at for the next few years. And the one game that I'm going to tell you about was simply stole out of my hip pocket by a fellow named Jimmy Dougherty. I get hot every time I think about it.

Maybe I better say I *was* a pitcher, because I'm not working at it now, and from the looks of things I won't be for some time to come. They've put me on the black list because I won't pitch for Ike Small no more. The National Commissioners say I signed a contract with a reserve clause in it, and I can't play for anybody but him. I don't wish 'em no hard luck, but I'd like to see 'em all hanging by the neck until I do. I'll

never pitch another ball as long as I live if I have to pitch it for that snake in the grass, and Ban Johnson and them other big bugs might as well hang up their fiddles right now. When I say a thing I mean it. I reckon, if it comes right down to cases, I ain't forgot how to drive a team of mules, and I know where I can get a job any day. They don't put a teamster on the black list just because his boss done him dirt.

I've pitched ever since I was a kid. As I got older, I found I could put more on the ball; and when I was nineteen I had a fast one that was like smoke in the wind. Control and curves, a change of pace, and a hop to my fast one. I reckon Joe Wood himself can't say any more than that. I used to pitch on Sundays for the Templeton Tigers, and we traveled all over the county, playing for the gate receipts, and picking up sometimes as much as six dollars apiece.

One day a slick, oily fellow named Garrett asked me how would I like to play in a real league, and quit work. I said that would suit me down to the ground, provided there was money in it. Then he began with a long song and dance about Christy Mathewson and Mortified Brown and Walter Johnson—how they all come from the small towns, and didn't get much dough when they first broke in, but was glad for the chance to show what they could do, and how they was now driving their own automobiles and dragging down a world of money for pitching maybe thirty games a season.

"I've had my eye on you, kid," says this Garrett; "and, take it from me, you're some ball player. You got the stuff that all these big-league managers are after, but don't run away with the notion that you can go to the top all in one jump, because it can't be did. You must get into some regular league—one that's under the protection of organized baseball—and first thing you know along comes a scout, sees you work, and bing! you to the East and the big money."

He said he could almost guarantee that. He showed me what a soft life

it would be, traveling around the State, and seeing the country, and putting up at first-class hotels, and pitching maybe two times a week. Only about four hours' work, he said. Then after that I could go East, and be celebrated, and get my five thousand a season as easy as rolling off a log.

It looks sort of foolish to me now, set down in writing this way, but while Garrett was talking I could just see myself riding in Pullman cars and eating a tenderloin steak every morning of my life. When he shoved a contract and a fountain pen at me and put his finger on the blank line, I couldn't sign my name too soon. I was afraid he might change his mind.

Afterward when I come to look the thing over, I found that I'd signed with the Bellingham club for sixty-five dollars a month—less than I was getting for driving them mules, to say nothing of the side money I used to pick up with the Templeton Tigers. I hollered some about that, but not much. Garrett had an answer all ready for me.

"Christy Mathewson didn't get no more than that when he broke in," says Garrett, "and you can skin mules from now till the day you die, and you won't never be worth no more to your boss than you are at present. What you want to look at is the *future*. Of course if you ain't got no ambition—if you *want* to be a mule Skinner all your life—that's different."

Well, what could I say to that? Blamed if Garrett didn't make me feel ashamed of myself for putting up a kick, it looked so kind of ungrateful after all he'd done.

"I'm doing you a favor," says he, "and it's because I'm interested in your future. I want to see you back there where you belong, pitching against Big Six and the rest of that gang. You can give Christy a terrible run right now, but you got to be developed some before you could beat him. Ike Small is the boy to develop you. He's so good at it that the big-league scouts just hang around his club all the time, grabbing his pitchers away from him. You'll like Ike; he's a grand fellow."

Well, he was at first, though I ought to had more sense than to trust a man with a long, hatchet face whittled down sharp at the chin; a long nose whittled to a point at the end, and a long, stiff upper lip. He had a kind of a bad eye, too—sort of a blue-gray color—and I'll bet he could look at you an hour without winking. He met me at the train the morning I got in.

"Do you want I should pitch this afternoon?" I asks him.

He laughed, one of them quiet, sarcastic laughs of his.

"You're in a terrible hurry, young feller," he says. "No, I wouldn't wish to care to have you pitch this afternoon, but if it's all the same to you I'd like to have you pitch some this morning. Leave your junk at the boarding house, and come out to the park. I want to see what you got."

Ike worked me for about an hour, standing behind me all the time like a section boss. It worried me at first, but pretty soon I got going, and showed him all I had. He didn't say as much as I thought he would, and what he did say wasn't complimentary.

"Quit telegraphing that fast one with your foot," he'd say. "Do you want to have everybody in the league waiting for it, and hitting it a mile? The idea of a fast ball is to pitch it with the same motion you use for the curve. You got smoke there, boy, but you might as well put it back in your grip as to let the batter know when you're going to use it."

I'll never say that Ike Small ain't onto his job. He is; I'll give him that much credit, anyway. He showed me more about pitching in that one hour than I'd learned all my life—and he told me the *why* of everything. I had a few trifling little faults when I first broke into league baseball—and I reckon Christy Mathewson had his, too, if the truth was known—but I got over mine in no time, Small working out with me in the mornings until he broke me of what he called "the bush stuff."

I was crazy to go in and pitch, but Ike kept me on the bench for ten days, and then sent me in to finish a game

against Titusville—when they had us licked by a score of seventeen to four. I thought that was a pretty mean trick, but I pitched my head off for three innings, and they didn't score. That night Ike tied the can to a pitcher he'd been hanging onto, and I knew I was elected. Two days afterward he turned me loose on the same club, and I made 'em look like cripples and orphans. I had 'em breaking their backs on my outdrop, and chopping at my fast one after it was in the catcher's mitt; and I'd have beat 'em, too, if it hadn't been for Harrigan shutting his eyes and hitting one a mile with two men on the bases.

We only had four pitchers on the Bellingham club, and it seems to me four ought to be enough for any team. I never could figure why these big-league outfits carry such a raft of pitchers. There must be a lot of loafing done back there.

It was about three weeks after the season opened that I joined the team. It was a four-club league—Bellingham, Titusville, Waverly, and Mill City; and right from the jump it was a battle between the first two.

The other clubs didn't seem to amount to much; Mill City didn't have no pitchers, and couldn't support 'em if it had; and Waverly had a gang of bad actors that couldn't hit a thing in the world but booze, or field anything but high balls. The Distillers we called 'em, and they had it coming. I tell you, it's going pretty strong when ball players take their flasks with 'em to the bench, and that's what those drunkards done regular. Of course that wasn't generally known, but it was so.

Well, it was up to us to trim Titusville. On the face of it, it looked easy. Bellingham had the best pitching staff—after the first month it did—the best hitters, and the best-balanced team any way you figure it.

Ike Small, he played first base; and, though I don't like a bone in his head, I've got to say for him that he was some first baseman and field captain. He knew baseball from A to Izzard, top, sides, and bottom; and it's my bet

that he could set right down with Frank Chance, or Jim McAleer, or any of them wise heads, and tell 'em stuff they never heard of.

Then there was Pete Blaney, our catcher. Pete could hold an infield together as well as anybody, and he wasn't no slouch when it came to pegging to the bases. Martin Dunn, Jack Gavigan, and Heinie Krause made up the infield with Small. None of 'em what you could call bad. We had Milligan and Tucker and Anderson in the outfield—two hitters and one slashing good fielder. What more would you want?

Then for pitchers—me, Kellerman, Murphy, and Hartley; two of us crackajacks, and two just steady, average boys that you could depend on week in and week out. Wouldn't you say that a ball club like that ought to have breezed home all alone?

I reckon baseball is some like poker; you may think you've got a cinch, but some fellow might take four to an ace, and draw out on you. On paper that Titusville team was awful weak. They had only two fence busters, and one of them was a pitcher, George Dana. Finnigan, the center fielder, was the other. Their pitching staff wasn't any great shakes outside of Anstruther. He was a left-hander, and the weakest batter that ever hollered on a strike ball. His batting average for the season was about as big as his collar—fourteen and three-quarters. Any time he got a hit it was customary to give three cheers.

Here is where the Titusville team was strong—they were every last one of 'em fielders, and they could run the bases. Their fielding held our scores down, and they could go out and make runs on nothing. The way those birds would hang around the plate and wait and wait for four balls was enough to give you the willies. All they ever asked was a chance to get on first base—and they didn't give a hoot how they got there, either. Even the Mill City boys could outhit 'em, but you can't always tell by a club's batting average where it will finish in the race, and those Titusville burglars had the knack

of getting runs over the plate. It's the runs that count, no matter how they're made.

The best man they had, and the one who made 'em dangerous and tough to beat, was Jimmy Dougherty—"the Flea." I claim that Jimmy would be a star on any club in the country, and the only thing that keeps him out of the big league is his size—that and the size of his batting average. He's little, Jimmy is—about the littlest man that ever played ball, I reckon. He weighs around a hundred pounds. There ain't anything to him but his nerve and his sliding pads. Yes, and his tongue. He's got a line of conversation that'll blister fresh paint.

Jimmy led off in the batting order, and because he was so darned little he was a hard man to pitch to. He made it a heap harder by using a crouch and crowding on top of the plate. A man might as well try to pitch to a mosquito. Jimmy Dougherty was the shortest man between the shoulders and the knees that you most ever saw.

He'd work you for a base on balls every other time up, and if he couldn't do that he would manage to get himself hit by a pitched ball. I've soaked that little devil hard enough to up end a cigar-store Indian; it never had no effect on him whatever except maybe to loosen up his tongue some. Then, if he couldn't seem to do anything else, he'd dump the ball down in front of the plate, and beat it to first base by a nose. That's how he come to have a batting average of two-thirteen last season. I'll bet he didn't hit the ball out of the infield ten times all year.

It was when the little rat got down to first base that the real circus began. Everybody called him the Flea, and a mighty good name for him, too. You can't outguess a flea, can you? And you never know how to go about double crossing one. Most generally all you know about a flea is that he's on his way somewhere, biting you at every jump, and jumping when you don't expect him to.

It wasn't any manner of use to try and nail him at first with a throw to

Ike Small—bless you, that was just what Jimmy wanted you to do. He'd monkey around there with his petty-larceny lead until you'd make a low throw, or Ike would let one through him, and then zing! you couldn't see him for dust. Then there was only one thing left to do—to get the ball, and heave it one base ahead of where you'd think he rightly ought to stop, and pray for luck.

One fellow like Jimmy Dougherty can keep a ball club all stirred up and worried something frightful. The infielders get nervous, wondering what he's going to do, and knowing that when he does it they've got to handle the ball fast and clean, and make no mistakes, or they'll lose him. It's one thing to pull off a chain-lightning piece of fielding, but it's another to do it when you know beforehand that you've got to. A fellow sort of feels responsible and worried, and gets a crazy sort of a notion that he wants to throw the ball before it gets to him. Then of course he boots one, and there goes the old ball game.

It don't do a pitcher no good, neither, to have a pest like that loose behind him, and it gets a catcher to crabbing. The outfielders, they get mad at the infielders for making errors, and first thing you know you got a lot of Missouri love talk floating around on the bench—everybody beefing at everybody else—and, as the papers say, a fine time is had by all present. I'd almost rather have three men on and a heavy hitter up than to have Jimmy Dougherty on first base with nobody out. There'd be less chance of the whole team going up in the air behind me.

Well, now, about that trouble with Ike Small. I wasn't forgetting it, but so's you get the full benefit of what happened you have to know about the Flea. He was mixed in with it.

We went along to the end of the season, about breaking even with Titusville, and both of us kicking the stuffing out of Mill City and Waverly. I got along all right with Ike, and never had no cause to complain of the way he treated me. I minded my business,

which was pitching ball; and he minded his, which was playing first and running the club. I wouldn't go so far as to say he was in any way intimate off the field, because he wasn't. Small kind of flocked by himself. Still, you'd never thought he would have done me dirt like he did, the low-down, ungrateful, ornery hound! I get hot every time I think about how he knifed me in the back.

Coming down to the last two weeks of the season, I could see that the close race was beginning to get Ike's "animal" a little bit. His angora was kind of blitting in a nervous sort of way. He took to fighting umpires and hollering at us for nothing, and things like that. I've heard that it was tipped off to him that if he wanted to manage the club another year he'd better come through with a winner. Abe Marx was the owner of the team, and it would have been just like him to say that.

Bellingham is a good ball town—the best in the league—but, like most of the good ball towns, it wants a winner, or it has to know why it ain't got one; and if you're beat in a whisker finish, edged out by one measly point in the percentage table, the fans will roar just as hard as if you'd been beat a mile. Yes, harder, because a close finish works 'em all up, and gets 'em excited. It ain't right and fair, but it's so.

Ike was having his troubles because we couldn't seem to lose that Titusville outfit. If we hooked up with Waverly, and won four straight, they'd win four from Mill City. If they lost a game we'd lose one, too, and when we came together in a series it was dog-eat-dog-and-sick-'em-Prince for fair, and nobody getting much advantage. Ike had to shoulder all the responsibility, of course, and it was him the fans bawled out when we lost a game. I never saw such unreasonable people; if we'd done it a-purpose they couldn't have made more of a fuss.

Well, sir, it came right down to one game for the bacon—with Titusville on our home grounds, the last day of the

season. It was one of them heart-disease finishes you read about, but don't see very often in any league. The Bellingham folks simply acted scandalous in that last series, and when we had a chance to sew things up by winning the next to the last game—and blew it by one run in the eleventh inning—I thought sure we'd be mobbed.

Why, they come right out on the field, and chased Ike to the clubhouse. That night they were saying that he threw the game to get one more big crowd, and all sorts of stuff like that. Grown people can act awful childish at times. If it had been a world's series we'd been playing there couldn't have been no more excitement or scandal. And us out there doing it all for sixty-five a month! It wasn't enough money!"

Ike saved me for the last game, which ought to satisfy anybody that he thought I was a better pitcher than Kellerman. There's them that has doubted it—and said so. I ain't knocking Kellerman any; I think he's a grand pitcher, and got everything a man ought to have, but—shucks!—I won't say no more. It was me that Ike picked, and you can draw your own conclusions.

We was dressing in the clubhouse after the eleven-inning game, and Ike came over to me, biting his finger nails and rolling his eyes, nervouslike. There was a mass meeting waiting outside to interview him.

"Biggs," says he, "it's up to you. They'll shoot old Anstruther at us tomorrow sure, and that means a tough game; but you've beat him before, and you can do it again. You *got* to. Get in there, and pitch your head off, and I'll see that Abe does the right thing by you; you won't lose nothing; I promise you that. If I had your arm and my head I'd make Chris Mathewson look like a selling plater!"

He laid it on thick, but most of what he said was the truth, at that. He knew that I wasn't the excitable kind, and never paid much attention to noise. When I'm pitching baseball that's *all* I'm doing; I ain't got no time to listen to what they're saying about me over on the bleachers.

You talk about a crowd! All of Bellingham and half of Titusville was at that last game. They came with tin horns and cow bells and horse fiddles and wash boilers, and one fellow from Titusville had a slide trombone. But the worst of all was an automobile salesman from Titusville. He brought along eight or ten of them electric sirens, and batteries to work 'em. Just one would have been bad enough, because I never hear that noise without wanting to drive into the ditch and then look behind me; but this boy was no piker; he brought all he had, and when he pressed the button Gabriel's trump they talk about wouldn't have been deuce high. It was unhuman, that's what it was.

The Bellingham boys figured that rooting by electricity was going a little too far, so they up and at the Titusville gang, and there was one of the finest fights you most ever saw. Our boys got the sirens, all right, but the Titusville bunch hung onto the batteries, and of course they wasn't good for much apart. The man with the slide trombone had about two joints of it rammed down his neck and broke off, and Gid Dennison, the city marshal, got his coat tore all up the back merely from standing on the outskirts of the fracas, and saying: "Let's have a little order here, please." Take it all around, we was pretty well keyed up before the game started.

When Jimmy Dougherty walked out to lead off for Titusville you'd have thought it was Roosevelt coming home from Africa, or something like that; but the visitors quieted down the minute I began to wind up. People can't yell and watch the break on the ball at the same time—a good thing, when you come to think of it.

Well, I knew what I had to do with that baby. Me and Pete Blaney had talked it over beforehand. The Flea got down over the plate, and humped himself till he wasn't much bigger than an organ grinder's monkey—and I cut loose with a fast one right over the middle of the pan. What's more, it was Jimmy's head I was shooting at.

Says I to myself: "If you get beaned to-day, old horse, you'll get it so hard that your great-grandfather's head'll ache for the next hundred years!"

Ordinarily I wouldn't take no chance on beaning anybody with that groover of mine, but this was a special occasion, and if he was going to try to get on first that way I meant to give him something to take with him that wouldn't do him a bit of good. It was a hum-dinger of a fast ball, and Jimmy just did manage to jerk his head out of the way of it, and the roar that he put up was marvelous to hear, considering the size of him. The umpire called it a strike.

"Here, you mule-skinnin' yap!" yells the Flea. "If you bean me, you'll never get out of this park alive—I'll promise you that!"

I went right back at him. If I never got nothing else from associating with mules, I picked up quite a lot in the way of conversation.

"You keep your head where it belongs," I says, "and you won't get it beaned. Poke it out over the plate again, and I'll knock it up in the grand stand, you warty-nosed, flannel-mouthed A. P. A. shrimp!" That was part of what I said, anyway.

"That's right, Biggs," said Small. "Talk to him! Tell him his real name!"

I noticed when Jimmy set himself that he didn't hog the plate quite so strong, but I slipped him the fast one again, a little farther inside this time. He had to duck out of the way of that one, and it went for another strike. Gee, but he was just frothing at the mouth!

"He's tryin' to kill me! He's tryin' to kill me!" he yells.

But you bet he got back from the plate on the third one; he'd smelt a couple of them fast ones, and he knew there was something on the ball beside the cover. Then Pete Blaney signed me for a curve. I wound up like I meant to throw one right on through the grand stand, and then gave him a slow bender over the outside corner of the plate. He swung too soon, of course, and nearly broke his back

reaching for it. Three strikes and out, and I reckon they didn't cheer or anything. Oh, no!

Dutch Dinsmore whaled out a long fly that Anderson dragged down, and Marty Finnigan, their slugger, hit straight into Ike Small's mitt, and we went off the field feeling better. We'd got to playing, you see, and the nervous strain was over.

Old Lefty Anstruther opened up good, too. That old boy has been playing ball ever since they wrote the rules. I reckon, but he can still swing those roundhouse curves of his across the corners, and slip in a fast groover once in a while. I don't see how he does it, because by rights he ought to be playing checkers in the old soldiers' home. He was always a tough pitcher for us to beat, and this day he wasn't saving his old soup bone any; it was the end of the season, and he was pitching like he didn't care whether he ever used it again. He struck out Jack Gavigan, made Joe Milligan pop up a cheap little foul, and Dave Tucker stood still and let the big one break in to the outside corner for a third strike. Horse and horse.

If you want the full details of that game you'll have to write the official scorer. I can't remember everything that happened, but there's a few spots that kind of stick out in my memory. We had it up and down—me and Anstruther—for six innings, and nothing on the score board but horse collars. I was holding 'em as safe as if they was locked up in a vault; they only got two hits in the six innings, and the thing that tickled me the most was that Jimmy Dougherty hadn't got to first base in three times up. That's how good I was going. The Flea was getting sorer and sorer, and the line of talk he was using would have been kind of unsafe in a billiard room, or on the street, but I didn't mind it the least bit in the world. I knew what he was after. He was trying to get me to take notice of him, but I worked in a grading camp for four months, and I'd heard all that talk before.

The third time he came to bat was

in the sixth, with one man down. He waited, but I wasn't throwing many wide ones that day, and he had to hit it. I got the ball without moving out of my tracks, and let him run his head off before I threw it, and what he said then would have got him half killed in some towns I could mention.

But what's the use of the best pitching in the world if there ain't any hitting behind you? Old Anstruther held us to two hits in the six innings, and both of 'em came with two men out.

"For Heaven's sake," says I to Small after the first half of the seventh was over, "ain't you *never* going to get me any runs? I don't ask for a flock. Gimme two—gimme *one*, and I'll be satisfied. One lonely little ace, and we've got 'em."

"We'll *do* that," says Small. "This miserable old man Anstruther is getting tired, and we'll step up now and give him a party. Go up there, Tucker, and take a smash at the first one."

Dave went up, and turned around and came right back again. He never could hit a left-hander, anyway, though he could make a right-hander holler for what they call a change of venue.

"Well," says Ike, picking out Pansy, his pet club, "I see it's up to me to lay this game on the ice. If I don't hit one a mile I'll bust my back trying."

He hit it all right enough. Lefty tried to sneak over his fast one, and Ike was laying for it. He whaled the ball to the fence for a triple. Up to that time I hadn't paid much attention to the crowd, but a deaf man would have had to sit up and take notice of what happened after that long drive. Fish horns and horse fiddles and tin pans and hats in the air. It was beautiful. Then up went Martin Dunn and slapped a bunt down the first-base line, and beat it out, Ike scoring. Those lunatics about wrecked the grand stand, and out on the bleachers every Bellingham fan took a punch at a visitor.

Ike came back to the bench, puffing like a wheel mule at the top of a grade. He sat down beside me, and wiped his face on his sleeve.

"We've got 'em now," he says; "but

we mustn't let 'em get away from us. Listen, kid. McLaurin and Harrigan are the first two men up for them next inning. Then old Anstruther."

"Huh!" I says. "Three of the softest marks in the world."

"Yes," says Ike; "but suppose they go out in order—what then?"

"What then?" I says. "Why, nothing. Three out—side out; that's all there is to it."

"Use your head!" says Ike. "Don't you see that that'll bring Jimmy Dougherty up to lead off the ninth inning?"

"Well," says I, "it can't be helped. I've had him eating out of my hand all day. We'll have to take a chance."

"We won't do any such a thing!" says Ike. "I'd sooner have anything else happen than to have the Flea up there to lead off in the ninth with nobody out. He hasn't done anything yet, and that's exactly why you can look for him to pull something this time. He'll be desperate."

"Well, spring it," I says. I knew Ike had something up his sleeve beside his undershirt.

"It's easy," says Ike. "You pitch your head off to McLaurin and Harrigan, and get them out of the way—savvy? Then up comes old Anstruther, and you walk him."

"Walk him!" I says. "Why, that old phillyloo bird ain't had a hit off me all season!" And then, all of a sudden, I saw what he was driving at. I don't know why it didn't strike me before.

"I got you!" I says. "You want to get Dougherty out of the way."

"Sure!" says Ike. "He's only dangerous when he's got a clear track ahead of him on the bases, and nobody out. You walk the old ice wagon, and up comes the Flea with two gone and the slowest man in the league plugging the circuit ahead of him. Anstruther can't run a lick, and Jimmy won't have a chance. If we get him out, fine; if he gets to first, he's still got Anstruther at second, and the only chance we take is that the next man will hit one a mile. That's what you call real inside baseball, kid."

"It sure is," says I. "Ike, you got

a great head." I didn't know then what a great head he had, but I found out later.

"You tell Pete," says Small, "so he'll understand."

I moved over beside Pete Blaney, and told him about it. Maybe I sort of let him think it was my idea, and Pete slapped me on the back, and said that John McGraw himself never thought of anything cuter. I don't know why I didn't give Ike credit for the scheme; it was an awful bad break, as you'll see after a while. And I've never been able to decide whether or not Ike had an idea that I'd *let* Pete think it was my notion. It would be like him to look that far ahead.

While all this was going on the Titusville bunch was retiring the side. Ike's one run was all we got out of it, but I figured the way I was going that an ace was enough to win with.

Well, it worked out just as we planned. I got McLaurin on four pitched balls, and Harrigan on three. Mac fanned, and Harrigan was thrown out at first. He went after a low curve.

"It's all over now!" the crowd began to yell. They always did that when Anstruther came to bat. Everybody in the world knew that he didn't even try to hit.

The old fellow ambled up there with his head down. I felt kind of sorry for him, he looked so discouraged and dragged out like. You can't blame him much, because he had been pitching grand ball—almost as good as me—and that one run hurt. I reckon they sent him to bat to make the third out and clear the track for the Flea.

I signed Pete Blaney, and he walked out a foot to the side. I tossed up a ball that Anstruther couldn't have reached with a billiard cue. I threw it good and wide on purpose so that the crowd would see what was coming off, and appreciate it.

Say, you ought to have heard the roar they let out. And that was one time when I was listening.

I saw right away that they didn't

understand the play, and of course it was me they blamed. That's all bunk about the fans catching onto the fine points of the game. They think with their *eyes*, confound 'em! They only know what they see, and half the time they see wrong.

I tossed up another wide one, and there was another fearful belch from the stands.

"Hey, what you trying to do? Throw this game?"

"Stick the ball over the plate!"

"Make 'im hit it!"

"Take him out! Take him *out!*"

Well, I was disgusted, but I reckoned the sooner I got through with it the better, and I lobbed two more. Old Anstruther walked, and none too tickled about it, as I could see.

"Going to spike our best gun, ain't you?" he says to Ike.

"I sure am," says Small. "Think I want that wild Indian leading off in the ninth? I should say not!"

You'd have thought the crowd could have seen what we was up to, and appreciated it; but the noise got worse and worse, and there was the Flea, squatting at the plate, skinning his teeth, as happy as a crab. *He* knew what was coming off.

Now, I had been sizing up the situation, and the way it struck me was this: Being that Jimmy knew he wasn't a long hitter—and it would take an awful smash to advance Anstruther, because he couldn't run a lick—the best play would be to work me for a base on balls, or maybe let me hit him, and take a chance on the next batter scoring the old man from second. Jimmy's long suit—when he had to hit—was to dump the ball down the infield, and beat it to first; but he didn't dare try it this time because Anstruther was sure to be forced at second. The way I figured it, Jimmy wouldn't take a poke at one if there was any other way out of it, so of course my play was to burn 'em down the groove, and *make* him. We didn't have to pay no attention whatever to Anstruther; he was hitched to first base like a mooley cow to a picket pin. He wouldn't run until

he had to, and he couldn't steal a base with a kit of burglar's tools.

The Flea crowded up to the plate as close as the law allows, and then some, and bent over from the hips like a man eighty years old. Unless he 'moved, throwing a strike ball to him would be like putting one through the hole in a doughnut.

"You better go way from there, James," I says to him, "if you want to enjoy good health this winter."

"You may be able to drive mules, you big, lop-eared teamster," says he to me, "but you got a fat chance to drive *me*." With a lot more that wouldn't be printed even if I wrote it in, which I won't.

"All right, James," I says, as cool as I am now; "don't let nobody scare you. Hold your head just where it is now, and your friends'll say a lot of pretty things about you, but you won't blush none."

He snarled, but he didn't budge an inch, and I made up my mind I'd drive him away from that plate if I had to bust his head wide open. I signed Pete for the fast one in the groove, and started to wind up. As I was fetching her back to let fly, Jimmy stepped away from the plate, and brought the bat up around his neck. It was too late then, but before the ball was out of my hand I knew I'd been sucker enough to let him kid me into doing the very thing he wanted me to from the beginning. Well, I gave him the best I had, and all I had—a sweet one, straight as a gun barrel, and exactly in the spot where he looked for me to put it. And he swung like the kick of a mule.

Honest, I didn't know the little cuss could do it. All season I'd seen him chopping short and bunting, and I'd kind of got the notion fixed in my head that he *couldn't* swing. He could, though, and the haymaker he took at that ball would have done credit to a man three times his size—*bam!* Well, you know what happens to a fast ball when you tie into it right, and Jimmy hit that one square on the nose.

Dave Tucker, out in the field, wasn't expecting it, of course. Why *would* he expect it, with that little burglar

never hitting the ball out of the diamond? Then again he might have been asleep, or out of luck, or something. He never saw the ball at all until it passed him, flying low, and singing like a swarm of bees, about six feet over his head. And our right-field fence was the deepest one you most ever saw.

I looked at Dave, and then I looked at the base lines. Old Anstruther was loping down to second like a lame camel, and Jimmy Dougherty was rounding first, yelling to Lefty for the love of Mike to pick 'em up fast and set 'em down far apart, and leave room for a fellow to run that *could* run. They went to third like a tandem team, and from there home Jimmy was prodding the old man every jump.

If the ball got back at all I never saw it, because about that time I noticed that a few million people were busting into the diamond from the grand stand, and they mostly seemed headed my way.

I didn't stop to argue with 'em. It struck me that it might get sort of sickly for me around there, and I put out for the clubhouse. I won't say as I was exactly *scared*; you see, I didn't wait long enough to find out if I was or not. I was too busy sifting gravel with both feet. Pretty soon I noticed that somebody was with me. It was Ike Small.

"They're after you, Biggs!" he pants. "It does kind of look that way," I says, or words to that effect. I didn't have to turn my head to see whether he was right or not; I could hear 'em coming. We tore into the clubhouse, and barred the door, and in ten seconds they was piled up outside, thick as ants. And yelling for me to be a man and come out and have things done to me. Lots of things.

"Put on this raincoat over your uniform, and beat it!" says Ike. "You can get through the back window and over the fence before they see you. It's your only chance."

"But my clothes!" I says.

"Never mind your clothes," says Ike. "This ain't no time to be thinking about

clothes. You better be thinking about your hide."

"Man alive," I says, "I ain't done a thing but what you told me to! You're the one they ought to be after—not me."

"Yes, yes," says Ike, his teeth rattling. "Leave it to me, and I'll explain everything; I'll square you. The main thing is for you to get out of the way before they lay hands on you. I'll tell 'em all about it when they cool down; leave it to me."

"Bring him out, or we'll break down the door!"

When I heard that it sort of gave me a cold chill. I grabbed the raincoat, and put it on.

"You fix it," I says to Ike. "I'm on my way. You can bring my stuff to me afterward."

"I'll do that," says Ike. "But for Heaven's sakes hurry!"

I shinned out of the window and over the fence, and I hadn't any more than lit on the ground before I heard a yell behind me:

"There he goes! There he goes!"

Well, now, you know when somebody yells "There he goes!" it's kind of natural for you to go. If I'd used any judgment I'd have known that the very worst thing a fellow can do when he hasn't done nothing is to run from the folks who think he has. I didn't stop to figure it out; it takes time to do that, and when I was once started it was too late to stop.

The raincoat was long, and bothered me some, so I shucked it and threw it behind me. The mob tore it up for souvenirs, and that was the best thing that happened that day, because the coat belonged to Ike Small. I wish he'd been inside of it.

One of those smart sporting writers in Bellingham said about me that I was a snail on the bases. I wish he could have seen me fade down that street; he'd have known better.

I'll bet there was a thousand men and boys behind me, hooting and yelling and throwing things. By the noise they made, there might have been a

million. I never looked around to count 'em.

I ran for half a mile as hard as I could pelt, and then I began to get winded. My chest was burning up, and I was seeing black dots in front of my eyes; my legs weighed about a ton apiece, and my tongue was hanging out a foot. It was a cinch I couldn't keep going much longer, and just when I was about to flop down in the middle of the street and holler for the police I heard a whistle and the rumble of a train. It was the Sundown Limited, leaving town, and the tracks cut across at right angles about a block away. The mob heard it, too, and cheered.

"We got him now!" they yell.

Well, it looked like it. They figured I'd have to wait for the train to pass. I knew if I could get across the tracks before she came along I'd have a chance, and I speeded up with all I had left, but it wasn't no use; she beat me to it by fifty feet, and there I was, blocked by a train of eight cars, yester-buled solid from one end to the other. I had to pull up. I thought then that it was all off with the Big Swede, sure. I took a peek behind me, and here they come, a million strong, and every one of 'em had a fence picket. The leaders were only half a block away; I tell you, it was a tough fix to be in.

You know how a fellow's mind will work quick sometimes—like mine did when I saw the Flea set himself for that fast one. Just the flicker of an eyelash, and there's your bright idea staring you in the face. Maybe it was the fence pickets that did it, but all in a flash I remembered that the Limited carried one of them observation cars at the end of the train, with an open platform and a railing around it. It was a long shot, but I had to play it—the only chance left.

I whirled and ran along beside the train, counting the cars as they passed me, and sprinting my head off, because I knew I had to be going some or I couldn't make it. I got a flash of brass railing over my shoulder, and jumped and made a grab for it when it came along. I nailed it by the skin of my

teeth, but it almost jerked my arms out of the sockets, and if it hadn't been for the brakeman and a cigar drummer, who hauled me aboard, I reckon I'd have had to let go.

I can't tell you what happened right after that, because I don't remember. I keeled over in a dead faint, but the cigar drummer told me he never saw so many disappointed people all in one bunch in his life.

I suppose you're wondering where my kick about Ike Small comes in. I'm getting to that now. I saved it for the end. I got off the train at Battersby, about eighty miles down the line. That cigar drummer was a prince. I told him what happened, and he paid my fare, and loaned me ten dollars to boot. He said the story was worth it; maybe it was, but some time I'm going to pay him back.

I didn't hang around the streets any in my ball uniform. I went straight to a hotel, and got a room. In the morning the bell hop brought me the papers, and there she was, all over the sporting page, in fine, big headlines. I can see 'em yet:

PITCHER'S ERROR OF JUDGMENT LOSES PENNANT FOR BELLINGHAM.

Biggs Chased Out of Town by Mob of Infuriated Citizens.

Can you beat that? "Pitcher's error of judgment!" Ike Small had put the whole thing up to me, the low-down, unprincipled scoundrel!

There was an interview with him in one of the papers, where he said he was "at a loss to understand why Biggs

should have walked the weakest hitter in the league"; and it went on to say that the only explanation was that the gamblers might have got to me before the game. He said that my leaving town without my clothes was the best proof that there was something rotten in Denmark, because an honest man would have stayed, knowing that he hadn't done nothing to be ashamed of. Ain't that the limit? It just shows you how the newspapers can twist a thing around and make black out of white; a man ain't got a chance for his white alley when the reporters get after him.

I almost forgot to say that they got the grounds cleared, and finished the game. The final score was Bellingham one, Titusville six. I wish it had been sixty! Kellerman pitched the last inning, and they belted him all over the lot.

Well, that's what I've got against Ike Small, and if I ever meet him face to face he better climb a tree, and pull it up by the roots after him.

He had the gall to send me a blank contract along in March, with a note where he says that the fans have cooled out quite considerable by now, and it would be safe for me to come back—for seventy-five a month. Shucks! I can make more than that driving mules. I wrote him pretty much what I thought, and he answered and said I'd pitch for Bellingham, or he'd have me blacklisted. Ban Johnson and the rest of them National Commissioners are backing him up. They say I can't play with any league club but Ike Small's. I wish 'em all well, and I hope they hang by the neck until I do; but they're cheating John McGraw and the rest of them Eastern managers out of a star pitcher, I'll tell you that!

In the first August POPULAR you will get another baseball story by Van Loan. It is called "The Fighting Spirit." On sale a fortnight hence, July 7th.



ONE WAY TO SAVE ENERGY

In front of the chancellery of the Spanish legation in Washington there is posted this notice:

"Office hours from eleven to twelve a. m."

The Law of 53°

By Herman Whitaker

Author of "The Planter," "The Mystery of the Barranca," Etc.

A slice of grim life from a logging camp in the dark woods, with two hundred miles of deep snow between the lumberjacks and the nearest fragment of the uncompleted Canadian Pacific Railway—beyond the pale of civilization, whose frontier halted another thousand miles beyond.

ASINGLE yellow ray, warm flicker of light, burst like a golden flower out of a calyx of frost and silence and night.

Solitary evidence of life in the vast spruce woods that clothed northeastern Manitoba as in a dark shroud, it marked at once the site of a logging camp and the beginning of its day. For it issued from the "cookee's" lantern, and as he went about shooting his ravenous alarm in through the doorways of the teamsters' huts, it gave origin to other lights.

Before he half finished his rounds a line of dim yellow squares suddenly punctured the cook house's dark mass, where a half dozen reflector lamps were hard put to force their brilliance through the inch of frost and ice that covered the window glass. Inside, however, their warm glow transmuted into silver plate long lines of tinware on the tables that soon began to fill with ravenously hungry men.

It was a long haul that faced them these days—two trips of seven miles from "skidways" to the "dump"—and in the effort to secure early loads the teamsters ate voraciously, bolting beans, pork, and bread in solid masses. While the latest comer was washing all down with huge swallows of coffee, the sled of the first was already to be heard screeching with a wild complaint against the raw frost, that ground the

runners like sand. After he had also disappeared a few minutes later, the lights went out, and frozen night surged in once more on the camp.

Out at the "skidways," however, where three gangs were loading the sleds, the "logging" day pursued its course. The loaders—big fellows, chosen especially for their strength—worked furiously in a cloud of their own steam, piling the logs on the massive sleds in tapering tiers. Though the "spirit" back at the camp had run down during the night to forty and odd below, they worked bare-handed, bareheaded, bare-armed, stripped to their undershirts, and freezing as it rose, the steam from perspiring bodies showed in the lantern light as a silver hoar that clung to every filament and thread. Shoving, rolling, lifting, to a chorus of profanity that damned all things between heaven and earth, they kept at it without pause for breath till the last load pulled out from the "skids."

By that time day had begun to steal like a mist through the white-floored forest, and under the first gray lights the wild flurry of woolen backs, muscular arms, dim, wild faces that issued at intervals from the vortex of motion, began to dissolve into component parts. Voices that had issued like profane astralities from the sweating ruck took on material bodies.

One, in particular, that was easily

distinguishable by a certain bitter malignance in its note, attached itself to a man whose red hair and pockmarked face assisted small red eyes in expressing just those qualities. A second by its peculiar vileness and pronounced accent proclaimed its owner that *rara avis*—a giant cockney. How his bulk had ever found nourishment in the filth and squalor of a Whitechapel slum must remain one of the mysteries that give birth to exceptions. But in all else, hoodlum voice, shifty eyes, palpitant vitriolic meanness of the face entire, he conformed to his degraded type. Last, though equally profane and even more sacrilegious than the others, a third voice that had been redeemed by the rough manliness that inhered in its booming bass, incased itself in the body of "Big" Dutton, the foreman.

Though a man may swing an ax all day with bare hands at temperatures of forty or more below, they will freeze the instant he ceases work, and after the departure of the last sled the loaders plunged as one man for their wraps and shirts. While they were dressing, the foreman, who was fully clothed, bent in frowning meditation over an ax that leaned against a "skid." The anger and irritation that suffused his broad, red face seemed out of all proportion to the cause, a gap about the size of a half dollar in the blade. But in reality his inner sight was focused, not on the thing itself, but on that which it stood for—to wit, the stealthy opposition that had dogged his every step these last two months.

"This your ax, Red?" Looking up quickly, he caught the grin of malicious amusement on the red loader's face.

"No; it's Cockney's."

"An' wot if it is?" The cockney's small snipe head emerged from a flapping shirt in time for him to hear. While his every smirking line twitched with insincerity, he repeated, in a tone of injured complaint: "Wot of it? Hisn't a bloke likely to knock a bit off 'is hax in frosty weather?"

"It will happen—once in a while." Answering, Dutton steadily eyed the pair. "On the av'rage, in a camp of

this size, it shouldn't be done more'n once in a winter. But this makes the seventh this week. Look a-here."

Snatching another ax, he swung it against the log with all the driving force of his height and strength. Apparently a fair blow, there yet came a sharp tinkle, and, holding the ax up, he showed a wide gap in its upper edge. "No flaw, either, an' it can be done every time with a sidling blow on a frozen knot. Now, listen." He glanced around the circle of loaders, who had suspended dressing to watch. "This little game has been running just long enough, and I'm going to take a hand. I'll begin by raising the limit. After this it's going to cost you just a dollar a chip. I'll have to charge this up, Cockney, to your account."

"To me? Blast my heyes! Wot 'ave I done any more than the rest? You say yourse'f as this makes the seventh—"

"An' if you ain't suited—" Dutton interrupted his querulous complaint. "An' if you ain't suited—there's the tote trail."

It was at once ultimatum and challenge, and, after delivering it, he stood, bunched fists on his broad hips, hard, level glance passing among the men, himself a center for all their glances. Of the dozen loaders, there was not one that failed to recognize the moment for that which it was—the climax of a winter-long struggle that had been none the less desperate for being veiled.

From Wisconsin forests and Michigan camp, indeed, the whole range of the lumber woods between the pine of Quebec and the California redwoods, his men had drifted in—whales of Swedes, rawboned Finns, English, Irish, Scotch, and French Canadians, the hardest of their kind. In spite of their hardness, however, they had bent cheerful necks to his yoke until Red came last. A seasoned lumberjack, with a reputation as a "scrapper" gained in the fierce fights of the Michigan camps, he had taken offense when Dutton passed him over in selecting men for the "road gangs" and other coveted jobs.

"I'll get his goat for that—you jest watch me," he had grumbled to the cockney, another natural malcontent, and with the two of them to sow liberal seed it had not been long before the spirit of disaffection spread through the camp. From a well-organized machine, running smoothly on its appointed work, it was transformed in one month into a rattletrap contraption that balked and jibbed, stopped and started, filling the air with the noise of its incessant friction.

In the blacksmith's shop the smith and the "wood butcher" worked overtime on an ever-growing pile of single and double trees that had been broken by snapping heavy teams on frozen-down loads. The trail to the "dump" was strewn with hulks of upset loads, and in the stables the teamsters wasted hay and grain with profligate hands. At meals the entire camp—choppers, sawyers, loaders, teamsters—growled so persistently that a new cook came and went with every trip of the "tote" team.

In the face of the good nature and discretion that the foreman had used in checking the abuses, they had still persisted, a new one springing into being on the grave of the last that he had killed. But the one that now faced him differed from the other in this—that it was the first time he had been able to single out and fasten it upon an individual. And, leaping at the opportunity, he stood ready to shove it to its utmost lengths.

And none knew better than he the fullness of their extent. Marooned there in the dark woods, with two hundred miles of deep snows between them and the nearest fragment of the uncompleted Canadian Pacific Railway, they were far beyond the pale of civilization whose frontier halted another thousand miles beyond. For them time had rolled back her scroll to the old time when all life obeyed one law, the law that governed alike the man and the beast, that still decides the quarrel of the wolves and the moose.

"There's the trail!"

That one short sentence expressed all, the law and philosophy of it.

Against the dictum could be but one appeal, so while he stood, hands on hips, hard, blue eyes fixed on the cockney, all looked to see if the latter would take it. For a moment it seemed probable. While his base face quivered like dregs of shaken vitriol, his mouth opened for speech. But the slum instinct militates always against a lone fight. Like the wolves, your hoodlum battles only in packs. His shifty eyes went first to Red. But failing to find in the man's bleak face any offer of present help, he bit off the rush of foul words that were crowding behind his lips.

"Ow, well." He forced a laugh. "You can 'ave it if you need it so bad. Two bally 'arf crowns won't brike my bank."

"Very well."

Turning, Dutton walked quietly away.

In the face of such a complete back-down, it was not for him to notice the profane explosion that presently burst in his rear. "W'y didn't I jump 'im?" Cockney's hoarse bawl came like a foul odor through the silent trees. "If you 'ad only nodded w'en I looked I'd 'ave jumped 'im quick enough. But not on my lonely—ow, no. You was there, you bleedin' piker, w'en 'e picked up that five-log tree that fell on Karlsen. Picked it up and threw it orff by 'imself, didn't 'e, w'en it took five of hus, afterward, to lift one bloomin' hend. And now you arsk w'y I didn't jump 'im? W'y didn't you do it yourself?"

"Shet up!" Red's harsh voice also carried to his ears. "'Twasn't my hand he called. When he does—well, you ain't a-going to find me looking for your help."

Grinning broadly, Dutton walked on. This morning a trail had to be laid in to a new skidway, so, instead of proceeding straight back to camp, he presently turned out into deep snow. Proceeding slowly, with a keen eye on the lay of land and trees, he had marked out not much more than a half mile of track when a pungent odor of wood smoke brought him to a sudden stop. In the depths of that continental forest the

frozen silence was rarely disturbed by wind, and such air as was moving flowed toward the camp.

"To be shore!" he exclaimed, after a puzzled pause. "That'll be the Cree's camp. Why didn't I think of him before? The very man I want."

Following the odor, he soon saw through the trees the blue-smoke pennon that streamed from the top of a snow-banked tepee. Warned by the crunch of the snow under his heavy foot, the Cree threw back the flaps and came out as Dutton appeared. Encouraged by the handsome price that he had received for a moose carcass at the beginning of winter, the Indian had taken a sort of unofficial commission as hunter in chief to the camp. Now his dark face expressed pleasure as well as surprise at the unexpected visit.

"So this is where you live, Shondro?" Dutton gave him hearty greeting. "If I'd known I'd have come to see you before. I thought your tepee was pitched miles away."

"Um was." Answering, he nodded his hawk head. "Too far. Come here with squaw and papoose last week. You come in and see um papoose. Heap fine boy."

"You bet I will. He's the only baby, and his mother's the only lady in all these woods, and we'll have to treat them right. Whenever you need anything for them, Shondro, come and draw on the store."

Blusterous good nature had wiped the last trace of recent irritation from his broad, red face, and, a few seconds later, the squaw—a broad-faced girl, not uncomely and rather light—looked on with shy pride while he strove with ponderous but tender forefinger to prod a smile from the babe. From the board upon which it was strapped like a wee mummy, however, it looked through and through him into farther space.

"He's a fine kid, all right, all right," he commented upon his failure. "Don't take a little bit to foolishness."

The domestic conventions thus observed, he turned to business. "There's some things that we forgot to order when the tote teams went out t'other

day, and I'm afraid we may run short before the next trip. Some one will have to head them off at the Portage. I can't very well spare a man, for it looks as though the spring thaws might get us before the finish. If you'll go"—he glanced at the woman and child—"I'll take good care of them. She can either come into camp, or I'll stock up the tepee with grub."

"I go." The Cree accepted at once. "You just send 'em out grub. She fine here."

His mind at ease on this point, Dutton went back to his work. Walking home after its completion, his way carried him over a rise that placed the camp at his feet. Rising out of sunlit snow within the dark, cradling arms of the woods, its solid buildings conveyed an impression of comfort and warmth. Not only had it been laid out upon his plans, but his own strong hands had helped to build it, and as he now noted its perfect adaptability to purpose, his face lit up with the enthusiasm of successful creation.

In his rough vision it stood, also, for a symbol, was a visible manifestation of that power which, in some form, appeals to all mature minds. For him, the raw settler's cub who had won to his present place by fiercely contested inches during twenty years' struggle in the camps, it represented victory. For that cub it was no mean thing to be placed in sole charge of a "cut" whose value ran into millions. Creation, power, responsibility, it meant all of these to him, and the shadow which presently extinguished the glow on his face indicated a recurrence in memory of the morning's trouble.

"They've set themselves to get me." His mutter indicated his perfect understanding of the problem he had to face. While his huge frame swelled to a tide of feeling, he added: "Well—they can't!"

Walking on to the store and office, a smaller log building roughly fitted with counters and peg shelves for the felt boots, arctics, rough woolens, and other articles for lumbermen's use or wear, he threw Cockney's ax, which he had

brought along, on the counter in front of the clerk. "Charge this to Cockney's account. Yes, he knows it." And he concluded a brief description of the trouble at the skidways. "He clean backed down. After this we'll see no more spoiled axes."

"Then you allow that we've beat them?"

Dutton's vigorous shake of the head indorsed the doubt in the other's tone. "No, sir—ree! They'll soon find another pick." After a glance through the open doorway, he quietly added: "Call me a liar if it isn't coming right now on its own legs."

And he was right, for the Swede who had just emerged from the forest carried a badly damaged saw. "Yansen, he hat it, the wadge, too strong," he explained the fracture across its center. "I t'ank we need a new saw."

"I t'ank you do." While reaching down a fine new "lance-tooth" from its pegs, Dutton continued: "You can tell Johnson from me that this costs the pair of you three-fifty apiece on the books." While the Swede stood, breathless, completely knocked out by this unexpected blow in his wind, he proceeded to drive in a second. "Then you can tell the other chaps that there's been altogether too much pinching of late. A new-filed saw ought to wear at least two days, and any man that can't make it do that after this is going to be charged up for the extra filing."

"Tray-fifty? Say, boos, don't you t'ank that's pratty stiff?"

His round, fair face exhibited such a calflike mixture of consternation and innocent surprise that the bookkeeper had to turn away to hide a laugh. But Dutton, on his part, never softened a whit. "That's what the saw costs the company. Break as many as you like at the price. What's more, I'll have to dock you half a day if you don't light right out."

"All right, boos; I go quackly back to work."

He presented such a hulking figure of abject dejection as he hurried away that the bookkeeper could no longer restrain his mirth. "That calf is safe tied," he

managed to ejaculate at last. "What's next?"

"Yes," Dutton musingly echoed. "What's next?"

During the next three days the question recurred often in the thoughts of both, for though the work seemed to be running with a fair amount of smoothness, they were both oppressed with a sense of coming trouble. "No, they ain't a-going to strike," Dutton replied to the bookkeeper's question as they sat smoking, one on each side of the office stove on the third evening. "They know darned well that I'd shut down the cook house, and they're too blamed scart of not getting their money to quit me in a bunch. They don't have to be told that it 'ud take 'em six months to get the little that was left by the lawyers if they played it that rough." He added, after a pause: "If they weren't so rawed in the mouth from me yanking on the bit, I'd almost allow they were ready to quit. They'll have one more try, and if it's long before something happens I'll miss my guess."

That "something" was even then in course of birth, had they known it, in the loaders' bunk house a few yards away. But even had they caught the comment on a declaration of Red's that was flying from bunk to bunk it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for them to have gathered its sense.

"My heye, Red, it would 'urt 'im more than a knife in 'is blooming ribs." Still sore from his own breakdown, Cockney led in adverse criticism. "But you 'aven't the sand to do it."

"Right you are, old top." An assenting voice issued from gloom and tobacco smoke that defeated the best efforts of a single lantern. "The Injun's living under Dutton's wing, an' Red darn well knows it."

"Oh, I don't know? Red's some man himself. There ain't ten pounds between him and the boss."

"The two biggest men in camp!" Some youthful sinner smacked his lips over the prospect. "That 'ud sure be some fight. I'd give a week's pay to see it."

"Well, you won't, son." The denying

voice issued from the bunk below Red's. "It's as Cockney says—neither Red nor any other man in this camp has the sand to do it."

"Got any money to back that?" Popping suddenly out of the upper bunk, Red's bleak, pocked face caught the smoky rays of the lantern that swung just above. In the dim light, his eyes shone pure red, like those of a snake. Writhen with venomous spite, his whole countenance loomed in gloom and smoke like a mask of hate. "Got any money to back that?" he repeated, at the close of a profane burst.

"Oh, shore! I'd as soon think of taking money from a kid," the unseen cynic answered. "Here you've been belly-aching all along what you'd do to a real chance, and now it's here you waste your time shooting off your jaw. Shet up and let us sleep."

If intended to end the argument, the admonition produced the opposite effect. From every bunk opinions now came hurtling through the gloom, and whether pro or con the feeling behind was the same—a sincere desire to set Red at the throat of the "boss." After the cookee came in and doused the light the battle still raged. It was in full swing when Red, who slid quietly down to the floor and dressed in the dark, slipped outside. It stopped only when the voice of the cynic rose in the dark:

"You might as well quit. He's dressed and gone out."

Opening one yellow eye in the night, the cookee's lantern shed first light on a day whose beginnings exhibited no external differences from any other. As usual, the teamsters hustled the stable chores, and ate ravenously in a race for the first load. Out at the skids the loaders worked just as furiously in a cloud of their own steam. As usual, the great sleds went creaking and cracking through the dark forest to an accompaniment of furious profanity and sharp whipcrackings. In fact, not until dim shapes and voices were again endowed with faces by the frosty dawn did the foreman begin to sense the unusual behind stealthy glances that followed him everywhere.

From spite and triumph that glittered in the cockney's mean eyes, cold defiance in Red's, the glances tapered off through various stages of ill feeling to expectancy, half curious, half amused, in the bulk. From the skidways he went out to inspect a new "cut" of logs the choppers were starting that morning. But here again the mysterious glances met and flowed after him, accentuating the flavor of evil that hung thick in the air.

"They ain't giving me the eye thataway for nothing," he summed it. "There's sure some deviltry afoot." But how purely devilish it would prove he never dreamed until, returning to the camp, he found the Cree woman crouched over her babe in the office.

The bookkeeper, whose bearded face expressed pity and concern, looked up and nodded. "Red."

More was unnecessary. Nothing short of tragedy would have driven that shy, wild thing to seek refuge in a white man's camp, and the instant he saw her Dutton plumbed the mystery of the stealthy glances, knew her for the object of vicarious revenge. In silence that was the more impressive by contrast with his usual boisterous anger, he looked down upon her, his face crimson with mortification and shame. After one fleeting glance upward, she dropped again over the child. With the same preternatural solemnity that it had exhibited the other day, a stare that seemed to concentrate within itself the immemorial wrongs of her sex and race, the babe returned her sullen gaze.

"Loaders in yet?" Dutton broke a long silence.

"Yes; but say, boss!" When Dutton looked back from the door, he went on with serious pleading: "It's a crime, and he's got to be called down. But I wouldn't go too far. She's on'y an Injun, after all, an' Red's got a ter'r'ble holt on the men."

"She's a woman—living under my hand." While the last trace of his usual good nature froze on his face, he added: "The men? They're foolish and thoughtless, like all of their kind, an' not a bit better than their mothers

would like 'em. But I miss my guess if they're so far gone as to stand for a thing like this. And if they are—well, I'm not." Walking away, he called back: "Rig a blanket partition across the hut, and keep her till Shondro comes back."

Stepping out, his expression reflected his stern anger. But when, half a minute later, he looked down from the doorway on the loaders sitting around their stove, his face exhibited its usual blusterous mixture of rough authority and profane good humor. Only a touch of the sardonic in his tone indicated his knowledge of the feeling behind their startled looks.

"I need a man to help me mark timber in the north limits. Lemme see," he continued from a sarcastic pause; "Red, you've been working overtime of late. I'll take you. It's a right smart tramp out there, and we can't wait for grub. Go and tell the cook to put up two lunches."

"Pretty warm in here." It was the cynic of last night who broke the silence that held around the stove after the two went out. When he rose and went to the door, the others slowly followed and stood, in a curious knot, watching the two figures going down the trail in the forest.

"Gosh! One of 'em's going to get badly beaten before he comes back!" This time it was the youth who had offered odds on Red. This, his second winter in the woods, found him still unlearned in its etiquette. Certain glances of irritable contempt merely provoked him to foolish questioning. "Well, tell now—ain't it so?"

"Yes, sonny." The cynic again broke a scornful silence. "One of 'em's going to get so badly beaten up that he'll never come back."

The dread interest of it sufficed to keep the boy still for full fifteen seconds. Then he again slopped over. "But, say, Peters, ain't that murder?"

"Murder?" The cynic spat his disgust. "If I drive the point of a cant hook through a man's head from behind, that's sure enough murder. But if he croaks me in fair fight—it don't

count no more than measles." To this rough statement of the forest code as it obtained in his day and generation, he presently added: "If I had a dollar for every man I've seen laid out there'd be no need for me to hook a finger on a cant hook for the next two winters. Murder?" He spat again. "You talk like them white livers on the outside."

"But—supposin' somebody squealed?"

"Squealed? About what? To who? Two men go out for a little walk, an' on'y one comes back. Ain't it reasonable to s'pose that t'other's hit the tote trail out? An' if he hain't, whose is the lookout? He didn't *have* to fight. Get back in. Yer nose is froze—like yer brains."

Going back in, he voiced, too, the rough sense of justice that had lain dormant under their late malicious pranks. "Murder? No, it's jest plain common sense. You kain't have two bosses in one camp, an' when Red undertook to prove the contrary, he had a right to know where it might end."

Meanwhile, the two walked on through the silent white aisles of the forest. Very quickly the trail brought them in sight of a chopping gang, and after they passed the men stood and stared with the steady gaze of knowledge and understanding. Lacking a fool to provoke conversation, their remarks were brief and laconic.

"Red's a good man in a scrap."

"Did you notice the boss' face?"

"Sure! Ca'm as though he was going to church."

"An' Red—"

"Looked like that wild cat we killed in the trap. All strung for his spring."

Once more rough justice asserted itself in the first speaker's concluding remark: "Well, that's natural. The boss has the rights of it, an' that goes a mighty long way in a fight."

During the next hour that the pair wandered along in the forest, Dutton abated not a whit of his astonishing quiet. When an iced track would come swinging out of the woods to the trail, he stooped always to inspect its condition. Passing through the clearings,

his glance roved hither and thither, searching for derelict logs. Once in the virgin timber beyond the scope of present operations, he proceeded even more slowly, pausing often to examine the trees and form rough estimates of the probable cut. And whether it took out of conviction that was just, certain, and inexorable as fate, or was merely assumed for its effect on Red, his unconcern began to wear on the latter's nerves.

The contemptuous grin that betrayed his first belief that the other's calm was affectation, became harder and harder to maintain. Black looks, threats, blows, would merely have stimulated the anarchy that ran riot in his blood. But this quiet indifference chilled his heat, forced him at last to speak:

"I reckon you didn't bring me out here to look at the scenery?"

"No; I'll need you—after a while."

The matter-of-fact tone was extremely disconcerting, and when, a few minutes later, Dutton sat down on a log and began to eat his lunch, Red looked his surprise, for his own dry mouth refused to moisten a crumb. He had to quit, after choking twice on dry mouthfuls, and the failure was rendered more difficult to bear because of the other's notice.

While they were resting, the wind—which was hurling the loose snows at sixty miles an hour over distant prairies—made itself felt in a cold breeze that mourned in the dark spruce and tossed the naked arms of the poplar with skeleton creakings. As, rising, Dutton walked on, it began to snow, at first slowly, then faster and faster until they were wrapped in a whirling white sheet. Indifferent, however, to this as to all else, Dutton moved steadily on, and, eaten by bitter fury, Red followed behind. If unaware of his feeling, Dutton would have been blind, for whenever he paused to glance around, Red made no attempt to conceal the venomous passion that glowed in his small red eyes. The length of the "north limits," and for an hour's march beyond, he held it in unwilling leash. Then, and with greater fury because of

the repression, it burst forth just as they emerged on a small glade.

"Say!" He stopped dead in his tracks. "D'you reckon I'm a dog to follow at your heel?"

"You're a dog, all right. A mean one, at that."

As he whirled around Dutton dropped, at last, the strange mask of quiet. Swelling in rhythm with his passion, his great body loomed gigantic behind the veil of falling snow, yet Red's bitter grin carried no trace of fear. His fierce soul rose at the prospect of action. Lip and nose curling, he snarled his contempt.

"You'll have to allow that I didn't follow your lead too close."

"You were disobedient, all right, as well as mean."

"C'rect. But names don't count. Come down to cases. You didn't bring me out for work or play. What you've got to say has got to be said right here."

"This will do." Dutton's gaze swept the dim, dark circle of spruce beyond the snow veil. "There won't be any interruptions, and they"—he paused, listening to the long howl that came drifting in from afar—"will wait till we are through. As for talk—'tain't necessary. You know."

"Yes, I know." His snarl relapsing into his usual mean grin, Red continued: "An' it seems to me real funny. They say that when the gangs hit the town in the spring you ain't exactly what 'u'd be called a pillar of public morals."

"They're right, too." He had begun to take off his moose-skin coat, and paused with one arm in the sleeve. "Outside I don't allow to be any better than the company I keep. But here!" Into the next sentence he packed that which, on the outside, would have kept a judge, jury, and brace of lawyers busy for several weeks—the law and philosophy, verdict, and sentence, as they went there in the woods to the north of "Fifty-three." "That Injun girl was living under my hand, and you knew well enough that I'd fight for her like she was my own white child. Strip!"

"What's it to be? Michigan style?"
"Foul fighting is all you understand."

Almost as he said it came the proof. While they were talking Red's eye had risen repeatedly to the dead limb of a poplar that reached out over their heads. Barked, polished, and dried to an iron hardness by wind and weather, it offered a formidable weapon, and, leaping as Dutton turned to throw away his coat, Red tore it off the tree.

Turning again at the crash, Dutton ducked a swinging blow. Then, shouting his anger, great hands clutching, face aflame, he sprang.

Rising from the trampled snow, Dutton shook the blood and sweat from his eyes. They had fought "Michigan style," which is that of the lion, the gorilla, the wolf, fierce as the battles of

the cave men in the younger age of the world, and waged to the same deadly end. Falling thicker than ever, the snow was already expunging the traces of fight, and while Dutton was dressing it laid a thin sheet over the face of the man whose wickedness had gone out with his life. For a few fleeting seconds its expression of writhen hate was reproduced in purest white. Then its evil was blotted out. When, from the edge of the glade, Dutton looked back, 'twere difficult to tell the mound from those that marked fallen trees.

And while, with the woodman's unerring instinct, he made his way back to camp, the frost slid iron hands under the cold counterpane, and fixed the clay in marble that would endure till the coming of spring prepared it for rude burial by the wolves.



AN IMPORTANT POSTSCRIPT

WILLIAM H. TAFT, when he was president, never overlooked an opportunity for a joke. In the closing months of his administration, Henry L. Stimson, then secretary of war, wrote Mr. Taft a very urgent request that he give a friend of Stimson a certain Federal position.

Mr. Taft wrote to Stimson as follows:

MY DEAR STIMSON: I am sorry I cannot do anything for your friend in response to your letter of to-day. I would like to accommodate you, but it is impossible

Sincerely yours,
WILLIAM H. TAFT.

Under that he wrote:

Turn over.

Then Mr. Stimson read on the other side of the paper:

I couldn't do it to-day because I gave the fellow the job yesterday.



THE MAN FOR THE JOB

IN certain circles the word "seed" is used to describe a man who invariably loses money in a poker game, the idea being that the poor, miserable wretch is the seed from which develops a fine crop of money for the good players.

Frank P. Morse, who hails from Florida, and tours the country heavily disguised as a high-strung Southern gentleman, is known everywhere he goes as "Seed Morse."

One day in New York last February some of Morse's friends were discussing who would be in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet.

"I'll tell you," said one of the friends, "how we can fill one job. Let's write a letter to Wilson recommending, because of his extraordinary knowledge of seed and plants, Seed Morse for secretary of agriculture."

Van Book's Boat

By Mayn Clew Garnett

Author of "The Light Ahead," "Stormy," Etc.

The story of a race between high-powered motor boats. The hero of the hour, strangely enough, turns out to be an illiterate fellow from the water front who wasn't able to get a license to drive Van Book's boat, and yet he played a big part in the race

I DON'T suppose I could hire a skipper to run her for me—do you?" asked the young gentleman of the crowd that hung around the landing.

Several grunts of manifest disapproval met this protest.

"That depends—somewhat—well—I dunno," hesitatingly answered "Bull" Wessel, who seemed to have more nerve than the rest, and who acted as spokesman.

"I'm Van Book, Mr. Clarence van Book, of the Upper Driveway—you know my house—yes—and I have bought the *Wildwing*, fifty horse power and about twenty-five feet long—and she can go some—take it from me, boys," said the young man.

He had just walked into the group of hangers-on. He was about twenty-four, dressed in the latest fashion, and wore kid gloves. The waterside bunch were rough. Yes, very rough. Some said they were all honest, but clever—a hard combination. Most of them were thirsty, some seemed to have a devouring fire within that would never be extinguished, no matter how much fluid—except water—was poured in upon it. Water always cured the burning at once, but here was a man who would surely not insult them with such an offer.

They all knew Mr. van Book by sight, and now that he had bought a flyer, a racing motor boat, he would probably join them in that strange fraternity of the waterside, the "boat bugs." That

was the name Bull Wessel gave them, "bug" meaning a sort of insanity that was not quite outside the law, and surely no one but a person suffering with a sort of insanity would run a motor boat unless they had hours upon hours of time, and plenty of money to spend.

"Well, there's Captain Jackson," ventured Wessel.

"What does he do?" inquired Van Book.

"Well, just now he's managing a laundry," said Wessel, without humor.

"Oh, I suppose he'd want a lot of money to leave his business, then?"

"I dunno about dat. Then there's Cap James. He's down about here sometimes."

"Well, what does he do?"

"He's running a dressmaking outfit," enlightened Wessel.

A man snickered. One swore softly.

"Aw, cut the jokes," said Bill Sweeny. "The gent asks fair enough. I'll tell you, mister—that Jackson guy has a wife—she washes, see? The James feller has a wife what—"

"Oh, yes; how stupid of me," laughed Van Book. "Of course I see, but will any one here tell me if one of these men will take the job at twenty-five per week—"

"You're on," snapped several voices all at once.

"I ain't never run no racing boat, but I'm willin' to learn at that rate, and more, too," said Wessel. "What I don't

know about gas engines don't go none about here, see?"

"What you don't know, I does," sneered Bill, with feeling.

"Well, if twenty-six years' experience counts for anything, I goes, and dat's straight," said a young man of twenty-one.

"Oh, I only want one man—just one man who knows all about the engine and all that sort of thing, you know," explained Mr. van Book. "I will do the guiding of the boat myself. I can tool a coach and six, and that's harder than guiding a footy little boat. But I like boats. I rode in one last week, and I decided to take them up regularly. They are so cool in warm weather, so clean from dust, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Well, I can lick any man, hands down, what says he knows half as much as I do about an engine—and we'll let her go at dat, see?" said Bull Wessel menacingly. He was a tough man, hard as steel, and a good fighter. The rest knew him well enough to let the matter rest for a short time. There was little use of getting licked—at least right away. Perhaps, after all, the boat was not much.

"I don't exactly see how that settles the matter, er—er—Bull—shall I call you?" said Van Book.

"You don't see it, hey? Well, think it over some," growled Bull, shoving out his under jaw. The rest of the bunch remained silent.

"What I mean to say is that your ability to lick any one, I say any one at all, you know, and all that sort of thing, does not necessarily qualify you as an expert engineman—does it?"

"It does," said Bull, with an amazing show of force and finality. He glared about him.

"I see," said Van Book. "The rest seem to agree with you."

"They do," snarled Bull, with meaning.

"Well, if you really think you can fill the berth, you may report to me to-night at my house. I will give you the keys to the boathouse, and you can go to work to-morrow. I want the engine

ready to race next Saturday in the club regatta. There's going to be a real race—you understand—something to remember. There's a cup of silver and one thousand dollars for the winner, and a lot of glory, and all that sort of thing, you know. So it is settled, then, that you will be my captain?"

"It sure is," said Bull, with a feeling of relief.

Van Book, having found his captain, started to walk off.

Bull Wessel looked hard at him for a moment. Then he called out: "Wait a minute—you forgot something."

"No, I think not—what is it?" asked Van Book.

"Why, that pay thing—how about it?"

"Oh—your pay—I see."

"Yes," said Wessel, "that pay thing seems to be forgot—hey? How about it, and when?"

"To-night we'll settle it. Be there at eight sharp."

"But, say—er—well, how about a little advance—now, you see?"

Van Book slipped his hand into his pocket and drew forth a roll of bills. He tossed one to Bull, who picked it up. It was five dollars.

Bull grinned. "Now de matter's clinched—see? I'll be there, sure, ready for work."

II.

Mr. van Book, senior, sat at the table and cut a melon. Supper had been light, as the weather was warm. A cool cantaloupe ended the repast, and Mrs. van Book watched her lord and master from her seat at the end of the board. Clarence was about to receive a portion when the elder man hesitated. Mr. van Book the elder was seventy and ruddy. Mrs. van Book was nearly as old; and stout.

"This excellent piece will be for your mother, Clarence—it is a most luscious melon, and she will enjoy it—here, dear, you take it," said Mr. van Book.

Mrs. van Book accepted the fruit, looked at it a moment. Then she pushed away her plate and motioned to the butler to remove it.

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. van Book, in surprise.

Mrs. van Book looked at him scornfully. "I prefer to pick my own melon—if you please," said she.

"Was there anything the matter with that piece I cut for you?—it was the best in the dish, really."

"Nothing the matter with it, my dear, but I prefer to choose my own slice—I don't like melon too ripe."

"But it was not too ripe, my dear; it was quite green and juicy."

"Yes, I know, but I do not like green melon—James, get me another plate," said the lady.

Mr. van Book arose from the table.

"I'm through—I never try to please you but what you find fault. I'll never pick out anything again—I'm through," he said, with finality.

"Oh, you needn't get mad about it—I simply wish to pick my own melon—I don't like them green and juicy," snapped the lady.

Mr. van Book left the room. Clarence found a chance to leave, and went outside, where he waited for a short time; then he heard the footsteps of Bull Wessel upon the pavement, and went to meet him. He would rather not have his parents hear anything while in their present mood.

Bull came up. "I'm on deck all O. K., hey?" he said, smiling.

"Yes, I see you are," said Clarence, "but I've been thinking—have you a license to run a motor boat?"

"A license—wot?"

"Yes, a license to run a motor boat. You must have one or get arrested—pinched, you know, and all that sort of thing. You have to get them from the local inspectors."

"Aw, I ain't got no license—wot for?" growled Bull.

"Well, you have to get one first before you get the job—now don't make any fuss or foolishness about it"—Wessel had begun to bluster—"just go and get one, and then you get the job. We'll go and look the boat over. Come with me."

Bull followed the young man silently down to the boathouse, where lay the

racer. She was nearly thirty feet long, four feet beam, and quite deep, with her six-cylinder engine placed amidships. A low, turtle-backed hood of light wood covered her forward length, and aft of that she was open, with two seats for passengers. The driver sat immediately behind the engine, with his helper alongside of him to run the engine. She was very powerful, evidently very fast.

"How do you like her, Bull?" asked the owner.

"Aw, she's a peach—but that license thing, wot?"

"Oh, go get it—that's all. The job's yours when you get it."

Bull made his way the next morning down to the waterside. The "bunch" were there waiting to hear the news.

"Say, Bull—did you cop it?" asked Raymond.

"Aw, I dunno. Say, do any of you guys know about that license thing? You have to get one to run a motor boat —dat goes, see?"

"That's easy enough," said Sam. "Who couldn't pass for a license?"

"Huh?" sneered Wessel. "Well, say, if you know it all, tell me how many whistles you give to go to starboard—how many to port—wot? Does anybody here know the answer?"

"Spoof! Why, you gif two whistles ven it iss you pass a boat by starboard yet, und von ven it iss you port your helm," said "Dutch" Mike.

"Wot!" said Sam. "You say you starboard your helm and gives two whistles. Here! Tell it again, Dutch."

"I say you port your helm und gif two—I means you blows vonce. Den ven you starboard—"

"Aw, g'wan, you don't know what you're talkin' about," said several.

"Spoof!" from Dutch. "Spoof!"

"Anyhow," said Bull Wessel, "I want three respectable fellers to write me letters to vouch for my character—see? Then sign on the license that I'm O. K. Which ones will do it for me? I got to get the license to get the job. They say I have to get the letters sayin' I'm the goods."

Sam shook his head dolefully. "You're a good fellow, Bull, but I don't want to go to no jail for perjury. How can we say you don't drink, Bull?"

The others remained silent. They evidently feared the responsibility of standing sponsor for their leader.

"Aw, so none of youse'll stand for me—me that's done lots of things for youse? Well, that's it—I don't get the job. All right, I'll race that boat with my old dory, and win out. I'll race 'em all—see? I can run my dory around them sharp fellers, and I'll trim 'em all. Let it go. I'll know when I ask you guys to stand for me again."

"Aw, spoof!" said Dutch. "Spoof, spoof!"

"I'll 'spoof' you, you frankfurter—I'll 'spoof' you before I get through," cried Bull.

"Spoof, spoof!" said Dutch.

III.

Alice Jameson stood upon the yacht-club float and watched the preparations for the race. Clarence van Book, with a captain all in white—a man from the yachting agency that furnished captains at so much per head—stepped into his racer and started off. The wind was blowing strongly, and a stiff sea swept the Sound. Far down the course a white object with a speck on top came skipping over the whitecaps. The sustained roar of its exhaust and the wild throw of the water to the sides told of a mighty power driving. It was the *Mors*, three hundred horse power forty-footer, and she was going something like forty miles an hour.

"And do they actually ride in a thing like that?" asked the girl.

"Aw, he ain't racing none yet," said a voice upon the float. Bull was there watching developments.

The white flyer skipping like a flying fish from crest to crest came roaring past. Forms of men crouching behind the hood from the driving spray showed as she drew near. The roar grew louder, the swash of foam swept up, and with a rush as of a whirlwind the racing craft tore past in a smother of

white, leaving a rolling swell in the wake where a faint acrid smell of burning picric acid mixed with gas hung upon the gale for a moment. A hand waved. Miss Jameson recognized her friend, Fred Small, the owner, who instantly shut off and swung around in a circle to the float.

"Don't you want to go with us?" he called.

"I promised Clarence to run with him—otherwise I'd love to," cried the girl.

"Come on, anyhow—just for a spin—we'll beat him easily," urged the owner, as the thin-flanked boat laid alongside.

The girl hesitated. She had never seen anything go like that racer. It was very exciting, exhilarating—and, well why—

"Yes, I don't mind if I do," she said, and stepped into the seat aft. "You won't run her too fast, will you?"

Small's eyes held a peculiar look when he answered. "Oh, no—certainly not—we never run fast, do we, Sam?" and he winked at his mechanician, who was oiling the engine.

The fellow smiled sourly. Small took the wheel and sat ready. His boat was a wonder, and he himself was reckoned a mild sort of speed maniac. He had built the craft, with only one helper, and he was as proud of her as of his mother, with whom he lived in the great house at the end of the Drive. Miss Alice Jameson had always regarded him as eccentric, a peculiar fellow, whom she rather liked, but feared. Van Book had been her choice; he had proposed to her, and had been accepted. Fred Small had said nothing, but had shown in many ways since that time that he harbored an intense dislike for the Van Books. Now he was to race the Van Book boat, and he had every chance of winning, for even with his handicap of several minutes' time allowance on account of his tremendous power, he had a remarkable speed, and a wonderful endurance in that motor.

"Let her slide, Sam," he said.

Instantly the boat shook with the tremendous momentum of the engine, and the exhaust roared forth its note of warning. He threw in the forward

speed, and, as if lifted clear of the sea, the boat shot ahead, raising her bows high in the air, and shearing off the seas upon both sides in a cascade of foam. Astern a boiling wake which spouted high into the air from the thrust shot away from them. A gale blew in their faces as the speed reached thirty-five miles an hour, and they shot away for the mark where the starter was even now getting ready to fire the warning gun to get in position for the race.

Far away down the harbor a tiny speck showed. It was a boat coming along rapidly, and the faint rattling of her exhaust, which sputtered fast and regular, told that she was running a speed engine of some power.

"That's Clarence down there," yelled Fred into Miss Jameson's ear. The roar of the engine drowned his words, but she looked and understood. Van Book's boat was running smoothly, and was coming for the start, with Clarence at the wheel.

Behind him came several other craft in irregular order, with their cut-outs spouting steam and fire in loud reverberating shots. The race was ready, and the boats stood for the mark. Fifteen craft of various sizes and styles of hull entered, and, before the girl could protest that she had already promised Van Book to go with him, Small had swung for the starting line, and had opened the throttle to pass over. A gun barked out, and a flag went up. The race was on.

IV.

"Really, Mr. Small, you must let me go now. I promised Clarence that I would go with him, and he will wait for me," said the girl.

Small grinned sheepishly and pretended not to hear. The roar from his now wide exhaust was deafening, and its steady, sustained note told of perfect firing and plenty of gas. Alice was perturbed. Small was a gentleman, and was not acting at all like one. She protested again and again. Then she was aware of the Van Book boat right in line ahead, and Small nodded as he saw

her gaze following that craft. Clarence was crouching behind the hood, and was driving fast. His captain was at his side to correct any errors he might make.

The *Wildwing* was running well, with her fifty-horse engine purring a steady blast of gas into the air astern. Clarence looked back but once. Then he set his teeth. Alice waved to him, but he refused to answer. Small bent forward and touched his needle a little, the quickening shots told of the reducing gas, and he opened up full speed ahead right in the *Wildwing's* wake. He would give her two minutes and something over on the short course on account of his enormous power. It meant a handicap of at least a mile.

Away they went, the smaller boats leading, while Small's *Star* and the English *Bulldog*, two hundred horse power, drove steadily up astern, shoving their long, sharp noses now high in the air, and driving a wild smother of foam from their long, thin flanks. The harbor was torn with churning wakes into white pathways. Far down the line the guide boats showed, and ten miles distant the turning-stake boat plunged and bucked in a short, nasty sea.

Alice found the sport very exciting. She was thinking what excuse she would give for her conduct when she met Van Book. Then she was aware of the *Wildwing* ahead, drawing slowly down upon them.

She watched the flying craft, and tried several times to get the attention of Van Book, but Clarence kept his eyes looking straight in front of him, and held the course well. They passed the first guide boat, and then a cheer broke upon the gale. Alice looked shoreward, and saw a dory with engine spouting blue smoke and flame dash out from the line, and follow close in the wake of the *Wildwing*. Warning blasts from the guard boats greeted the newcomer, but Bill Wessel was racing, and headed not at all. Doped with picric acid and extra high-grade gasoline, the power dory, with her ten-horse engine, was fairly flying over the crests.

Jeers and cheers greeted the craft,

but Wessel still held on. He would show them something about running a motor boat, even though he failed to get a license to run one. That captain of Van Book's was especially offensive to his eyes, and he snarled out curses at the man in white, who, of course, failed to hear them in the roar of the exhausts.

Small drew slowly up abreast of the *Wildwing*. He grinned over at Van Book, and touched the needle under the carburetor again. The *Star* answered to the more powerful mixture, the roar grew more and more sustained, and louder, and the forefoot of the flyer seemed to rise a bit above the sea, which now was shooting under her at the rate of forty miles an hour. Alice was vexed. She would rather have had Clarence go past the *Star*. She waved to the *Wildwing*, but Small tore past before she could see whether there was an answer, and the flying spray shut off the view.

The race was now on in earnest. The tearing snort of the engine and the burning gas made it difficult to realize what was taking place about the girl. She was bewildered, but enjoyed the fierce pace, felt the mighty power driving her through the air, and she wondered at the man whom she had snubbed. He seemed part of the mechanism, part of the power that drove and drove and strained away for something ahead, something unattainable. She was getting wet from the flying water, and Fred tossed her an oil-skin, still holding the wheel and gazing straight ahead.

A small, floating object showed right in the line. There was a sharp knock, a crack, and pieces of wood flew from the whirling screw. But the roar held steady, and the speed showed no slackening. It had been a close call.

The *Bulldog* was slowly creeping up under the *Star's* counter. Her firing began to grow plainer, more distinct. She was going large. Her skipper showed his eyes above the hood, and wiped them now and again from the flying spray. The *Dog's* forefoot just touched the tops of the seas, and seemed to flit

upon them like a swallow's wing. Astern of her roared a wild sea, which rose several feet above her transom, and the four pipes which let out her burned gas spit a thin bit of yellow flame above their tops which turned into a transparent blue vapor, and tore away to leeward flat from the edges.

The speed was prodigious. Small turned a moment to watch her. His face set hard and he stopped grinning. He touched the needle again. The *Star* spit back as the gas went below par, but with a quick hand Small opened it again, and she lost nothing by the movement. The *Dog* came slowly abreast.

It was now a race between these giants of the gas motor. The rest of the fleet was far in the rear. Wessel, in his dory, held along behind in spite of the warnings blown at him. No boat cared to risk herself in front of the rushing racers, and, as they passed, the dory did no further damage to the course than to ruffle in with her efforts. It was clear ahead, and the stake boat was close to the two leaders.

Small, bending low under the hood, drove the *Star* at top speed. He was fairly flying, and the girl was absorbed in the wild rush. The *Dog*, with her motors turning a thousand revolutions, split the air with her firing, which now turned into a steady thunder as the boats laid alongside. The sea seemed to fly under them. The vibrations were so rapid that there seemed to be hardly any motion at all, just a steady thundering roar. Alice gripped the coaming and held on for the turn.

Small, holding the starboard position, swung with his helm hard aport to round the stake, and get the inside position. The *Dog*, giving an extra spurt of speed, forced him closer than he wished to the buoy.

Small stood up, waved his hand, and held it outward to starboard. The girl noticed the glare in his eye. He was furious. The *Dog* had no right to force him into the buoy. The drag from the *Dog's* stern kept the *Star* from turning sharply. She sheered wildly. Sam, the mechanician, arose and gripped the

sides, while his face paled a little. It was a tearing speed for trouble. Small tried to hold the wheel over; the *Star* balked, heeled to port, then, as he tried to straighten her, she clipped the buoy.

It was but a touch, but at that speed a touch was frightful. The flying boat sheered off, lifted high in the air, and fell with a crash upon her side, with her engines going full speed ahead. Sam, Small, and the girl were thrown into the sea. The *Star* scooped up a ton or more of water, which filled her above the carburetor, and she swung heavily right across the path of the flying *Dog*. There was no time for anything to prevent an accident. The *Dog* struck the swamped craft amidships, running at the rate of more than forty-one miles an hour. There was a crash that could be heard a mile. The English boat leaped into the air, buckled, and then dove headlong to the bottom, with as neat a dive as could be wished for. Her crew of two were flung far ahead by the impact, and they swam toward the *Star*, to which Small and his mechanician were now clinging, the latter holding Alice with one hand to keep the fainting girl's head above water. Right astern of the mess came Van Book at full speed, and he was heading straight into the tangle.

V.

"Keep off, sir, keep off," yelled Van Book's skipper.

Clarence saw, but heard little. Right ahead was his fiancée in the arms of Small's man; probably he was holding a lifeless body! Not used to sudden resource, the young man arose and stood petrified with the apparent fatalities. Then his captain, seeing his indecision, made a grasp for the wheel and, in doing so, sheered the *Wildwing* straight into the stern of the *Star*. The flying boat cut her in two like with a knife, and she passed on unhurt, leaving the four people using her as a refuge to flounder for their lives. With a rare presence of mind, the captain sprang overboard, leaving Van Book to run his boat as best he could.

Clarence awoke from his 'trance to

find the *Wildwing* tearing along with undiminished speed, leaving his sweetheart drowning astern. He now swung hard upon the steering gear, but the impact upon the swamped *Star* had weakened it, and the bronze line parted with a snap. Again the flying craft held along, with her head swinging slowly against the thrust of the right-handed wheel or screw. Clarence was half a mile away before he realized that the best thing he could do was to shut down. This he did, and he lay helpless more than half a mile from the disaster. Behind came the rest of the boats.

Among the ruck came the power dory. Wessel was driving her for all she was worth. The cracking shots from his cut-out told of his efforts. Right into the mess of craft Bull held his way, then he shut off and drove up alongside the captain of Van Book's boat, who held Alice with one hand, and swam easily with the other. Bull reached over and dragged the girl into the dory. Then he yanked the captain in and hit him a fierce blow in the face, knocking him into the stern sheets.

"That'll hold you, you white duck—you don't know enough not to leave a bloke alone in a boat wid his engine goin' full—I've a notion to nail youse."

Alice was too weak to protest, but she tried to stand up and speak her mind.

"You lie down, missy—I'll take care of you all right. Mr. van Book ain't much of a boatman, or he'd have had me wid him—see? But you can't tell him nothin'. If you say so I'll take you over to him," said Bull.

"I'd rather not—no, go home as quick as possible—he didn't even stop for me—did he?" choked the girl.

"I reckon he didn't know how to, missy," said Bull, with a grin.

"But he might have at least tried to save me. Instead he almost killed me—ran his old boat right over me—all because I wasn't in there with him. I didn't think a man could do such a horrible thing. No, you take me home at once."

"All right—dat goes," said Bull.

He cranked the motor; it spit and barked; then away went the dory for the landing ten miles back.

Clarence, in the *Wildwing*, saw his sweetheart being cared for, but taken away in that odious dory. He grew desperate. He would catch that boat and demand the care of the girl. She might need him badly, she even might be dying now. Bull Wessel might have at least ran over to him and taken him along. He started the motor. The crackling shots grew into the sustained roar, and then he threw in the clutch.

Bull was a mile or more away when he heard the rattling in his wake. He turned and saw Clarence coming down the course full speed right after him, and he was pretty sure of his errand. The captain, whom he had struck down, sat up and gazed hard at him.

"That's the boss, you brute—stop for him—I'll settle with you afterward," said the man in white.

Clarence strove to steer. The broken bronze rudder rope hung slack, but he managed finally to get hold of the ends. In the meantime the *Wildwing* swung off in a circle. He made a quick knot in the rope, and sprang back to the wheel. He was just in time to save his craft from cutting down a launch full of sight-seers. They yelled at him as he flew past. He tried to shut the throttle down, but only succeeded in getting a back fire, which so scared him that he instantly opened it again. Wessel was heading well off from the crowd of small boats that were watching the race. Many of these were running full speed for the place where the accident had happened. The dory had a clear course.

Clarence found that, while he could haul line on one side of the boat, and therefore steer easily to starboard, the knot caught in the runner just as soon as he tried to go to port. He did not quite realize what this meant until a launch, coming full speed head on, blew her whistle for him. He tried to answer the two blasts, but failed. Then he swung to port, and found that his flying craft would not answer. The coming launch swung off and swept by

him less than six inches distant, covered in a cloud of foam, and hurling epithets at him. Again a boat tried to cross over. He waved his hand, and the *Wildwing*, holding her head straight, tore past the stern, cutting a splinter from the oak. The shock almost threw the yachtsman overboard, but he clung on to the steering wheel.

Wessel was now drawing up, for the speed of the *Wildwing* was twice that of the dory. Alice was but a few lengths ahead, and Clarence could see her gazing straight ahead, and evidently unaware of his presence. He yelled, but the roar of his exhaust drowned his cry. Wessel, sitting unconcernedly, listened to the captain, who now pointed to the *Wildwing* coming up astern.

"If you don't stop this boat at once, I'll stop her for you," said the yacht captain.

"Take a chance—aw, g'wan," growled Bull, pulling out a piece of lead pipe from under the seat, and holding it firmly in his hand.

Clarence came roaring up alongside, the blast from his engine blowing right across the dory.

"Stop her—stop her—I want you, Mr. Wessel," he cried, as the boats drew alongside.

"Beat it, youse, g'wan, now; I'm takin' the lady home," sang out Bull.

The speed of the *Wildwing* was such that it carried Van Book quickly past the dory. Clarence tried to slow her down, but the engine stopped dead. Wessel went barking past.

"Come aboard here and help me," yelled Van Book.

Bull shut off, swung the dory alongside, grinning.

"What's the matter with you? Can't you run the boat, sir?" he asked.

The captain jumped aboard the *Wildwing*, and muttered threats at the doryman.

"I'll fix her right, sir," he said, and started the engine. "That fellow struck me with a piece of pipe—nearly killed me, sir."

"Miss Jameson, will you get aboard—I'll take you home—I'm awful sorry.

for the accident— It couldn't be helped, you know—”

The roar of the exhaust made it difficult of speech, but Clarence held the clutch, ready to shoot ahead, and he waited for the young lady to climb aboard.

“I think I'll stay where I am, thank you,” said the girl.

Wessel leaned over the rail and placed his head close to Van Book's.

“Do you really want her, sir—say de word.”

“Er, what do you mean—certainly I wish to take her home,” said Van Book.

“Will youse give me de job—skipper, you know—sack de guy in white duck, an' let me run her—”

“Yes—if you'll get her aboard here at once,” said Clarence. He was growing very nervous. The girl was certainly angry, very angry. It might mean something serious.

Miss Jameson was sitting looking away from the *Wildwing*. The gases annoyed her, and she refused to speak to Van Book. The first thing she was aware of was the powerful arms of Bull Wessel about her, lifting her

quickly and bodily from the seat. Before she could cry out she was aboard the *Wildwing*, and Bull was apologizing for his abruptness. He reached for the wheel, threw in the clutch, and Van Book's boat shot away for home. \

That night Bull sauntered down to the beach where the gang held out, and were now discussing the race. Van Book won. The *Wildwing* was the first boat of her class to make the round, in spite of all the difficulties.

“Aw, I'm de skipper, after all, see—I had to run her over de course in de end—dey wanted to go right home—leave the race unfinished. I run her over an' connected—dat's all,” said Bull.

“Spoof,” said Dutch. “You runs nodding at all—I sees it.”

“Well, anyways, I git de job—see?”

“Spoof—spoof,” said Dutch. “An' you means to tell me they give that man von thousand dollar for running over that course after the boats all sunk?”

“Dat's what I says, Dutch—I lands de coin fer him, I lands de goil—see, an' dat's what he wanted most— If one of youse'll git de jug, I'll pay, and I'll buy twict.”

There was another story of motor boats by Mayn Clew Garnett in the April Month-end POPULAR, which can be obtained from any news dealer.



RUNNING RINGS AROUND NIMROD

CY CUMMINS, the biggest, tallest, and heftiest member of the Maryland legislature, was a guest one night at a “bear supper” given at a club in his county. Bear meat was served, and on the stage at the end of the banquet hall there was a tremendous live bear.

Nobody could figure out why the live bear should be there. Speech after speech was made, and joke after joke was sprung. But nobody referred to the large and ferocious animal. At last the toastmaster arose and made these few remarks:

“I now introduce to you Mr. Cy Cummins, a member of our State legislature. He is the man who wrestled with the bear which you see now on the platform. He will tell you how he did it.”

“Gentlemen,” said Cy, lifting his six feet six inches to their ultimate destination, “to say that I wrestled with that bear is to state a sordid and sinister untruth. I never wrestled with a bear in my life. Whenever I turn my attention to one of those things, I step nimbly up behind him, grab him by the ears, and kick him to death.”

The Cast Line

By Shirley Cookman Hayes

A story of the crab fishers of the Western coast. A bit of life that is not often exploited in fiction. A dog, a girl, and a single cast of a weighted line without the aid of reel or pole, are the chief elements in the reclamation of Nels, the despondent

THE butcher shop that Monday morning was crowded with breakfast buyers. Shawl-headed Italian wives, careworn and sallow; fresh-cheeked schoolgirls, their heads butterflied with enormous ribbon bows; freckled, tousled, unwashed gamins awaiting under penalty of the maternal strap their turn for "ten cen' hamburg," or "fi' cen' lard," all jostled each other in a mixed, straggling throng under the dressed meat that was suspended on iron hooks from the ceiling.

When Nels thrust his swaying giant's torso past the screen doors his appearance provoked a ripple of giggles, stares at his empty pockets flipflapping wrong side out, and open laughter at his wet clothes that marked the sawdust with a trail of water.

It was the morning after a protracted spree; he had just withdrawn his aching, tawny head from beneath the hydrant. After searching his pockets in vain for some small silver that might buy him breakfast, he had snatched them furiously to the surface, that his half-closed eyes might make sure they had nothing to conceal. A cheerful smoke was pouring out of the stovepipe of his neighbor's shack across the way; there came to him the clatter of breakfast dishes and a fragrant aroma of coffee when he stumbled down the beach path past his crab caldron and made his way to the meat market under the Franconia Hotel.

The butcher, a retired bartender friend of his, grinned at him amiably, with a jerk of the thumb backward over

his shoulder. Nels was too dazed to immediately comprehend. He was trying to recall something he wanted, a thick porterhouse steak, that, a long, foggy time ago, had reposed in all its red, juicy glory upon the marble slab. One wealthy crab catcher's wife had inquired its price, and, on being told, had jeered openly at his friend, the retired bartender. The butcher, aware of the independence of his fisher customers, had reduced it a nickel, and the woman and her approving friends had continued to hoot derisively.

Nels slouched at the tail of the line, while the ache at the pit of his stomach became more insistent. He glared hungrily at the counter heaped with mounds of sausage, scrap meat, and bologna, hoping to behold the treasure he coveted lying in lonely grandeur under some oblong fly screen.

A slender girl in a soiled rosebud dimity, her straight black bang cut across a high forehead, gave him a sympathetic glance. Her aunt kept a boarding house, and she was an abused little slavey with a stock of pert repartee to disguise her fear of the laborers that jollied the other women. She liked Nels, who was unaware of her existence.

The butcher at length called out to him: "Nels, look out back!" and gave him a friendly push toward the shop's backyard. He shuffled out to the garbage barrel in a weed-grown corner, removed the lid, and recognized near the top of the pile the valuable porterhouse steak that his friend could not sell and

might not give away, but whose strength had reduced its social position.

With a sheepish grin he took it out by the bone, and, holding it at arm's length, made his rolling way back through the shop. There was a yell of laughter from the audience as the screen doors banged to behind him and the ancient porterhouse.

From the meat market he went on to the beach, past the crab caldrons of his fellow fishermen, and out upon the crazy, half-open structure of the abandoned iron-works wharf. From underneath a pile of rusty tin roofing he jerked out an old crab net.

Also he dislodged a fox terrier who had been dozing in the sun on top of the tin pile, and who retreated with a sharp, scared bark at the racketey pistol-shot report of the noisy stuff as it was trodden upon, but whose little black nostrils wiggled like a rabbit's at the gamy smell of the meat Nels held.

The dog advanced and flung backward, yapping; but, unheeding, Nels stolidly fished out a piece of string from a crack, and tied the porterhouse securely into the bottom of the net. This done, in spite of the protests of the fox terrier, who rose upon his hind legs and howled as the porterhouse plunged downward out of sight beneath the opaque water, Nels, with shaking hands, wound the rope round the head of a worm-eaten pile, and sat down on a log to await developments.

It was warm and very quiet. Above, the light-blue sky; underneath, the greenish, rippling water. In the little harbor lay the launches rocking lazily on their cables; the waves lapped against the kelp-edged brown cliffs right-angling the wharf; a barge squeaked on its moorings as the tide swayed its clumsy, orange-colored hulk against the piles. A pair of heavy bays hitched to a lumber wagon drooped tired heads, napping in the hot salt air and longing for noon and feed bags.

A bell buoy near the Presidio landing chanted a doleful "tang-tang; tang-tang!" It brought back to Nels a long-ago church bell, when he walked to service with Karen across the flowered

fields of the old country. How far away; how dreamlike! Karen! He hated the name of his Danish sweetheart, who, weary of waiting, had jilted him for a little brewer as fat and rotund as one of his own kegs. The tolling brought back to his lonely mind a half-forgotten tale of his youth as he stared at the whitecaps frothing in the bay under the lashings of the Gate wind. The dancing green water made him dizzy; he turned his eyes away, and dropped his head into his big hands.

"*Klokker!*" * he muttered.

He felt something licking his wrists. The fox terrier stood before him, his stump of a tail wildly vibrating as he applied to Nels all the sympathy in his little red tongue. The man's hand fell heavily on the dog's spotted back. The terrier's tail stopped wagging, and drooped to match his lowered head.

The sunlit minutes passed, and Nels dragged himself out of his stupor and went forward to haul up the net. Four crabs had crawled in to test the prize porterhouse. Of these two undersized were cast back; the others Nels flung upon their backs while he lumbered off in search of a gunny sack.

Lounging against the piles was a barefoot, scowling boy, one of the morning line at the butcher's. He waited until Nels was out of sight before sneaking up on tiptoe to annex the kicking things. The dog saw him coming, and greeted him with a furious onslaught. Nels, appearing round the corner, saw the howling boy in flight, and the terrier hurrying back to guard the crabs. The man made no sign, but after he had exchanged the two crabs for lamb chops he let the dog follow him home, where they breakfasted together.

From that day the dog refused to leave. For a month, two months, Nels was sober, and fishing good. He sometimes varied his crab-catching with fishing for tomcod or other small fry, being past master of the difficult art of casting a weighted line without the aid of

*Danish for "bellringer." Synonymous with "fool."

reel or pole. The dog, his inseparable comrade, seemed to have brought him luck, for he slept on his ragged mattress by night, and guarded his fish by day. Nels began to dream of money in the bank, of owning a little yellow launch.

But one day the thirst for drink again overtook him. He fought the craving—strange to say, that he might not neglect his small companion, for Nels was one in whom the sense of duty is strong. After the fifth day he gave up the battle, but waited until night came, when he fed the fox terrier and tied him up just outside of the door.

The dog, unused to the rope, whined and cried, crawling up Nels' legs only to be jerked backward on his haunches, where, panting and gasping from the thing that cut his neck, he sat up with folded paws to beg his master not to leave him. The piteous, brown-eyed appeal made Nels ashamed of himself. But the heat within him was insatiate, a relentless demon that drove him on, and he shut the gate and half ran down the beach path, his shamed ears long pursued by the despairing howls of his only friend, whose cup of water he had forgotten to fill.

He started to make the rounds of the eight saloons at Harbor View. Two days afterward, when he had begun to know a dreamy happiness, with visions of pink-cheeked Karen and the gardens of the old country, a frantic whirlwind of black-and-white fox terrier, his gnawed rope end dragging, assailed his unsteady legs, barking with a crazy rapture that set the half-tipsy men in front of the bar at Giovanni's to roaring with bestial laughter.

"Here's Crusty dog!"

"Go home, Nels; yer wife wants ye!"

Nels was standing with a glass of beer raised to his lips when the dog shot in under the swinging doors. He was surprised and wrathful. His hand shook, and he spilled some of the foam. The dog, panting after his chase from one saloon to the other, began to lap up the liquid from the floor.

"Hey; give us a drink!"

"He's signed the pledge!"

"Not on yer life!"

"Try him; here!"

Half a glassful was tilted to Crusty by a stooping, red-faced shipbuilder. The dog lapped it down thirstily. He wanted water, and this had a bitter taste, somewhat unpleasant. He was, however, nearly dead for a drink, and swallowed the last drop. A roar went up; a shout that shook the glassware on the polished bar.

The bartender, grinning broadly, led the dog round to the rear, and introduced him to a bucket of dregs and froth, the dripping from the kegs. But after a few desultory laps the dog had enough, and felt his head begin to swim. He started on a hurried trot back to the barroom, to find his master gone. He nosed about until he caught the scent, and tracked Nels to the next saloon, where no one offered him any drink at all. But the location of the beer bucket was indelibly impressed inside of his head somewhere beneath the splashy black spot over one eye. Crusty never forgot anything.

After the usual number of days Nels, with pockets again empty, returned to his shack to sober up, a dejected fox terrier at his heels. This first experience of drink hardly allured the dog; he much preferred water, and when Nels was home his cup was never empty. But with his master away on a forgetful spree, Crusty was tortured by thirst, and, after chewing his musty rope in two, he would fly from saloon to beer garden in search of the one he loved, pausing only for a hasty lap out of some drain bucket of the kegs behind the bar.

Sometimes the chase was a long one; he might be three saloons behind, with Nels already on a second tour of the eight. Then the dog, with too much beer on an empty stomach, would begin to stagger and lurch from side to side.

During the course of these indulgences Nels slept on some bench outside a saloon, not going near his beach shack for days. The dog nosed about back doors, and begged whatever remnants the housemothers could spare. They flung him scraps of garlic-flavored fish fried in oil, screaming "Begone!"

in several Italian dialects. They knew and admired Nels, the blond giant, with his close-mouthed, stolid dignity, and although they shrieked with laughter when he rolled past, followed by the little dog staggering drunkenly, but managing to keep his master in sight, each feminine heart felt the pity of it.

Jennie, of the slant eyes under the black bang and the nasal banter, would give the dog a strangely softened look when he came scratching at her aunt's back door, and a surreptitious pat when offering the plate of food she abstracted from the larder of the boarding house.

This repeated itself for months. After one of these absences Nels returned to find his house unaccountably clean, the trash swept up and burned, his weed-grown garden watered. But, oh, desecration! the tattered pink silk curtain he had bought for the front room when Karen was true had disappeared; in its place a new-washed piece of rosebud dimity that had a familiar look. He wondered dully at it, and questioned Crusty in Danish. Crusty, having accompanied his master along the primrose path, listened respectfully, the while stirring to enthusiasm his stump of a tail. But being unable to enlighten him, he would bark a short "Search me!" and then dismiss the subject.

His neighbors also pleaded ignorance. There was nothing worth robbing in his house, and Nels accepted the phenomenon, being too stupid after a debauch to care very much.

The look of him became more untidy, with his thick, blond hair uncut and uncombed, his mustache a gloomy straggle. He felt drink fastening upon him like the octopus it was. With each successive indulgence degeneracy crept closer inducing a hopeless, careless indolence of habit and thought, a disgust of himself. When sober, his mind took to cursing the pink-cheeked Karen and the beast she had made of him; he remained unconscious of the indulgent looks of the young women of the quarter, or the sheep's eyes of Jennie.

Even when out of liquor he and the dog had become the laughingstock of

Harbor View. A drunken man—that was nothing; the streets were full of such—but a drunken dog!

They laughed when he passed, and he would pull his shabby old hat farther down over his wide-set blue eyes, his heart sore. He hated them, his friends and neighbors. His sprees came oftener, his struggles against them futile.

One autumn dusk he was drinking at the bar, and the little, staggering Crusty was lapping out of the drain bucket at Giovanni's on the main electric line to the beach. Overhead, outside, the two great power lines of eleven thousand volts each growled deep warning of the deadly force they bore. Half a dozen men, their shaky, unclean hands clutching tall beer glasses, jostled each other before the bottles of the bar. A sunburned sailor with a string of tomcod had just raised a foaming glass to his lips. He was boasting of his catch when Nels sneered drunkenly at him and his line casting.

A sudden quarrel sprang up, with Nels protesting in a rich, husky baritone how sober he was. The men pressed about, interested.

"Bet you can't cast a line!" The sailor's voice was threatening.

"Try me."

"Now, ain't he drunk?" The near-sober one turned for confirmation to the others.

"That don't matter."

Some one snatched the wound, wet line out of Jack's hip pocket, and pushed the pair into the street. Behind the two men and the reeling little fox terrier the rest poured out, a jostling, red-faced, zigzagging crew. The street showed figures hurrying from grocery to vegetable store on belated errands for the evening meal. The tide was running out; there was a bloodlike glow in the west beyond the *tang-tang* of the bell buoy. The crowd gained the wide street, with its tall trolley poles. A thin girl in the act of taking down her hair before the half-open window of a boarding house in the next block leaned part way out, comb in hand, her slant

eyes fixed upon one member of the group.

The sailor thrust the soaked line, with its copper-weighted end, into Nels' hand. The men scattered to the rim of a circle to give him room to swing. He stood for a moment, swaying uncertainly. The rest jeered. He heard, and pulled himself together. The line went round his head once, twice, three times. The whipcord whistled, and Crusty, waiting on beer-heavy haunches, pricked up a drooping, intoxicated ear. Out high above the poles shot the weight, straight and true, stood a second on end in the blue ether, and dropped like a plummet to the high-power transmission wires of the City Electric Company.

With the descent of the copper weight on the wet cord the current grounded. From somewhere out of the sky there came a deafening explosion. Struck into a heap, the drunken group tumbled writhing over each other, arms and legs waving windmill-like. There came a series of crackling musket reports. The trolley wires farther down had broken apart. Crusty, with a screechy yelp, hoisted himself drunkenly onto the pile of twisted backs, and with wildly burrowing forepaws dug for his master and safety.

Running lines of fire darted above them from pole to pole, flashing blue lights over the street. There was a wild rattle of express wagons, the noise of clattering, shod feet as runaways tore down the street, their bare-headed, ghastly faced drivers hauling on the reins in their swaying vehicles. Some dropped off and ran into doorways to hide; their horses, smashing the light wagons into splinters along the way, galloped crazily on down to the beach, where, panting and wild-eyed, they were later caught in the breakers, scraps of harness still clinging to their backs.

There broke upon them a great, blinding flash, followed by a roar. High above it, piercing like a fife, cut the shriek of a woman. Human beings crouched in doorways like sinners, struck down upon the Day of Judg-

ment, and, quivering under the spouting blue flames and crackling explosions, raised terrified heads to look.

A girl, her pinched face agonized, her unbound hair floating in a thin, inky stream behind, was running directly toward a coil of sputtering, deadly wires. Men shouted, but their voices were reduced to whispers under the thunder of the explosions. Shrieking, on she came, and by a miracle passed not two feet from where the fallen wires lay shooting sparks and burning great holes in the asphalt.

The drunken men, kicking feebly, lay piled in the middle of the street outside of Giovanni's. Jennie saw that the tipsy fox terrier had set teeth into one blue-overalled leg projecting from the mass. She reached the dog, and forgot to scream. Grimly she set her frail strength tugging at this limb that belonged to Nels, while Crusty, hiccupping between hoarse howls, tried his tipsy best to help.

The girl hauled desperately, choking out mad appeals to Nels. He heard, and found enough sense to try to extricate himself when one or two half-sober men crawled off on all fours to the shelter of the saloon doorway. As they did so a broken wire fell across the perpendicular support of a cross trolley just opposite, and grounded. The heat of the contact bent the steel pole like a wilted flower stem. Jennie broke into prayer: "Mother o' Mercy! Nels! Nels! Fer God's sake, come!" He wriggled halfway out of the pile, and paused for a second, blinking, huddled upon all fours. The girl, with strength fast ebbing, dragged at him, jerking him to his feet, while the little dog yapped and hiccuped, too frightened to run, and beaten again to the earth by the next ear-splitting explosion.

The noise wrought some miracle that cleared Nels' clouded brain. Somehow he found his feet. The girl pushed him on, beating at his broad back with her small fists. Clutching at his staggering body, she drove him to the entrance of the saloon, where the pair fell over the drunken men and the howling dog.

The next moment a live wire dropped upon the car track, where the rest lay helpless. Those who did not dare to look heard drunken shrieks—the shrieks of the dying!

After the power had been turned off, and the charred bodies removed from the street, it was discovered that the wire had seared its way half through the car-track rail. About the hideous group were patches of burned asphalt.

For three succeeding days Crusty lay in a barrel with a nausea that turned his little, spotted stomach wrong side out. It cured him of drink. Forever after to those that tempted him he turned a sickish black muzzle and fled.

With Nels the shock sobered him temporarily, but the habit had too strong a grip to be soon cured. When the horror was past, and his dead comrades buried, he began to brood sorrowfully, drinking to help himself forget his part in snuffing out five human lives. The vision of pink-cheeked Karen faded, paled; perhaps because a mischievous, slant-eyed, dark face became more friendly day by day. People stopped laughing at Crusty, who knew when he'd had enough, and who had suddenly become a sober, straight-trotting, spotted dog.

But the time between the man's sprees gradually increased. Jennie's solemn reproach as she fell exhausted over his debased body in the doorway of the saloon that awful dusk—"Tis yer drink that's killed 'em!"—set him to pondering. He felt he had to think it out; he needed time. And this digestion of it kept him sober in order to arrange some strange ideas that filled his head, formerly empty of all save his rancorous disappointment.

It was a sunny morning in Giovanni's that the slow-meditating matter under

Nels' tawny mane reached a conclusion, He had been assisting it along by a glass or two, while Crusty waited outside the swinging doors and whined.

Suddenly his dreamy eyes shot out a blue-green fire. He slammed the glass untasted down upon the shiny bar with a violence that sent the froth flying into the faces of the bartender and his offended friends. Without a word he strode out of the door. The enchanted Crusty, unable to climb his swift-moving leg, howled at him to stop. Nels stooped, and with a muttered exclamation gathered the little dog into his arms.

With the fox terrier snuggled against his breast he made his way to the boarding house. Jennie, alone in the long dining room, was languidly setting out the dishes for the midday meal.

At the sight of Nels standing in the doorway, with the dog hugged awkwardly against him, she gave a cry. The platter she held fell to the floor with a crash of shattered pottery. But for once she forgot to fear the shrieking abuse of her calliope-voiced aunt.

Across the narrow tables set out with thick crockery and the inevitable bottles of mustard, pepper, vinegar, and red catchup, the great-bodied man and the thin, starved girl stood staring, each afraid to move, each forgetful of all else save the light in the eyes of the other.

Huskily Nels found his voice.

"Jennie——"

She answered with a smile that was half tears.

But Crusty, twisting about discontentedly in Nels' embrace, flung himself to the floor, and shot forward with a yelp of excitement. It was Crusty who was already drying her tears with a million ecstatic dog kisses when slow-moving Nels at last arrived and took the pair into his arms.

"The Girl of the Hundred Steps" is the title of a striking serial by J. Kenilworth Egerton which will begin in the first August POPULAR. It is another adventure of Tommy Williams, artist and hypnotist.

The Destroyer

By Burton E. Steyenson

Author of "The Mind Master," "The Boule Cabinet," Etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRAP.

TO Kasia Vard the day had been one of manifold excitements. Like Dan, she had awakened to find the boat motionless, and had run to the window to gaze entranced at the green slopes of Sandy Hook. Home! Home! She fairly sang the words as she dressed and rushed on deck. From that instant, every moment was charged with emotion, culminating as she leaned against the rail and gazed with misty eyes at Bartholdi's masterpiece. She remembered how, ten years before, her father, with tears streaming down his cheeks, had lifted her in his arms for her first sight of the majestic goddess, and had explained to her, in a voice broken by emotion, why this statue stood here, at the entrance of this great harbor, holding her torch high in the air.

The ship swept on, and Kasia, with a sigh of joy, turned her eyes forward for the first sight of New York.

It was at that moment her father joined her. One glance at his face, and she had placed her hand within his arm, walked back with him to their suite, entered, and closed the door.

"Now tell me," she said. "What has happened?"

"I have just seen Pachmann," answered her father hoarsely. "He has arranged for the final conference as soon as we land. It will be at the consulate. There is yet one danger," and he dropped his voice. "Pachmann has discovered that there are spies on board—French spies. They suspect some-

thing—how much we do not know. But it will be necessary for us to evade them. We will leave the pier as soon as we land with Pachmann and the prince. Pachmann will have a car waiting—he has made all arrangements. Here is your landing ticket."

Kasia took it and slipped it inside her glove.

"Very well," she said. "But the baggage?"

"We cannot wait for that—it would be too dangerous. I will return for it as soon as the conference is over." His eyes were burning with excitement, his lips twitching with nervousness. "I am glad that the hour is at hand," he added. "I feel that I could not endure a longer delay—these hours of suspense are dangerous for me."

Kasia laid a calming hand upon his arm.

"I know, father," she said. "You must not permit yourself to dwell upon it so. Let us go on deck again and watch the landing."

"No; we are to wait here," said her father. "These last moments we must not be seen," and he sat gnawing feverishly at his fingers.

The long minutes drifted by. They could hear the rush of feet and chatter of voices on the deck outside, then excited cries of recognition and greeting, as the boat swung into the dock, and finally the clatter of the gangplank as it was run into place. Almost at once there came a tap at the door. Vard sprang to open it, and found Pachmann and the prince outside.

"You are ready?" asked the former.

"Yes," and Kasia and her father stepped out upon the deck.

"You have your landing checks? Good! Then we will start."

They joined the long line moving down the gangplank.

"This way," said Pachmann, the instant they reached the pier, and led Vard hurriedly toward the entrance.

Kasia, left with the prince, glanced into his moody and downcast face.

"So we are to have another chat," she said, smiling at his woebegone appearance, and tucked her hand under his arm. "You look as though you needed some advice. What is wrong?"

He glanced at her, then looked away, and answered with a shake of the head.

Just beyond the entrance stood a handsome limousine, its motor throbbing. Pachmann hurried them all into it, stepped round for a word with the driver, then himself jumped in and slammed the door. The car started with a jerk, backed out of the pier shed, and headed away northward through the streets of Hoboken. This way and that it turned and doubled, while Pachmann stared anxiously through a little window at the back. No one spoke, but they all watched Pachmann's face. At last they were in the open country, with a smooth road ahead. The driver opened his throttle, pushed up his spark, and in a moment they were whirling along at forty miles an hour. Pachmann looked back for yet a moment; then he turned with a sigh of relief, and sank back into his seat.

"We have evaded them," he said. "But we will take no chances."

On and on went the car, climbing to the top of the Palisades and threading the Jersey woods; mile after mile along woodland roads, past country estates, through little villages, on and on. At last, on a long stretch of lonely road, they stopped, and the chauffeur climbed down, detached the license numbers at front and rear, and strapped on another set. Then onward again, back toward the river, and finally, at the Fort Lee ferry, down to the water's edge. The boat was about to start when the car

ran on board; in another minute it was backing into the stream. No one else had come on board, nor was there any sign of pursuers on the bank.

Leaving the ferry, on the other side, the car at once plunged into a tangle of streets, and Pachmann half drew the curtains. Then, turning southward along Riverside Drive, it joined the endless procession of cars there, in which it became at once only an indistinguishable unit. Finally it turned eastward along a quiet street, swung sharply around one corner, and then around another, and stopped.

"Here we are," said Pachmann, threw open the door, and jumped out.

The prince followed, and, without looking back, walked straight across the sidewalk and up the steps of the house opposite. Pachmann, with a smile on his lips, waited to assist Miss Vard to alight.

"But this is not the consulate!" she protested, looking first at the house, and then up and down the street. She had never seen the consulate, but she knew it would not be in such a house nor in such a street. Besides, there was no flag above the door.

"No, it is not the consulate," said Pachmann smoothly, and turned to Vard. "I found, at the last moment, that there was a reception at the consulate to-day which would make our conference there impossible. I managed to procure this house, where one of our secretaries lives, and where we will be secure against interruption. But if you prefer the consulate, we can, of course, wait until to-morrow—"

"No, no," Vard broke in. "Let us get it finished at once—there has been too much delay."

"I agree with you," said Pachmann. "I, also, am anxious to get the affair settled," and he led the way into the house. "If you will wait here, Miss Vard," he added, and pulled aside the hangings before a door opening from the hall. "We will not be long."

Kasia stepped through the doorway, and the curtain dropped behind her. She heard the footsteps of her compan-

ions mounting the stair to the upper story; then all was still. She glanced about the room. It was a rather small one, furnished as a sitting room, with furniture both cheap and scant. There were two windows, side by side, which opened upon a little court or areaway closed in by high walls, topped by an ugly and formidable iron chevaux-de-frise, which would be equally effective in preventing any one getting in or getting out.

She soon exhausted the interest of this limited prospect, and, turning back to the room, spent a long half hour wandering about it, looking at this and that, endeavoring to keep her thoughts occupied. She was vaguely uneasy, a feeling of oppression weighed upon her, and from moment to moment she caught herself listening for some sound, but the house was absolutely still. Finally she drew a chair to one of the windows, and, sitting down, stared out again into the little court. It was dark and damp and well-like, and apparently never swept, for its pavement was littered with rubbish. Again she caught herself listening, her head half turned. But she heard no sound. It must be past the middle of the afternoon; she should be getting home to set their rooms in order, for to-night Dan was coming—

And again she was listening, rigid, breathless in her chair. There was no sound; but suddenly, with nerves aquiver, she sprang to her feet, crossed the room, and swept back the hangings at the door. She was surprised to find that the door itself had been closed. She turned the knob, but the door did not open; she shook it, but it held fast. And then she realized that it was locked.

It was a moment before she understood. Then, very quietly, she crossed the room to another door, and tried it. She had expected it to be locked also, but to her surprise it opened. Beyond it was a bedroom, also with a window opening on the walled court, and beyond the bedroom was a windowless bathroom. There were no other doors.

She returned to the other room, and

again tried the door, testing it cautiously but firmly with her whole strength. Yes; there could be no doubt of it—she was locked in. She went to one of the windows, raised the sash, and looked out. It was at least a twelve-foot drop to the flagged pavement of the court. That might be managed with the help of the bedclothes, but there remained the high wall and the threatening iron spikes. Below her she could see that a small door opened from the court into the basement of the house, but it had no other exit.

She found the fresh air welcome, and sat down at last before the open window. She was much calmer than she had been; now that she was face to face with danger, the feeling of oppression vanished and her courage rose. She was a Pole, she had been trained in a hard school, she was not afraid. No, she repeated passionately to herself, she was not afraid; and how she hated that smooth-tongued German, with the cold eyes and smiling lips! Treacherous! Treacherous!

"If you will come this way," said Pachmann, and Vard tramped after him up the stair to a room on the second floor.

The prince was already there, standing at the window, hands in pockets, staring moodily out.

"Be seated, Mr. Vard," said Pachmann. "My dear prince, will you not sit down?"

The prince flung himself into a chair.

"And now, Mr. Vard," went on Pachmann, sitting down very deliberately face to face with the inventor, "our answer is ready for you."

"Very well; let me have it," snapped Vard, twitching with impatience.

"We refuse to accept your conditions."

For an instant there was silence, then Vard leaped to his feet, his face livid.

"So you have been playing with me!" he cried. "Well, I suspected it! And you shall pay! Oh, you shall pay!" and he turned blindly to the door.

"One moment!" called Pachmann,

and his voice had in it a ring of command which Vard had never heard before. "Sit down. I have still something to say."

"I do not care to hear it."

"That is nothing to me. You shall hear it!"

With a glance of contempt, Vard strode to the door and turned the knob; but it did not open. He wrenched at it madly, but it held fast. In two strides he confronted Pachmann.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"The meaning," replied the admiral sternly, "is that you are a prisoner here until I choose to release you. Now will you sit down?"

Vard stood for a moment, his face deadly white, his hands clasping and unclasping convulsively, staring down into Pachmann's leering eyes; then he went slowly back to his chair.

"That is right," said the German. "It will be best to take this calmly. In the first place, I want you to realize that you are wholly in my power. Nothing that occurs in this house will ever be known to the outside world. If you should fail to reappear, there will be no one to trace you. You will remember that we have your daughter also. And I say to you in all seriousness, and as emphatically as I can, that neither your life nor your daughter's life will cause me to turn aside, or even to hesitate. I would kill you with my own hands, and then your daughter—yes, and a thousand like you, if need be—rather than that this chance should be lost to Germany. I say to you, then, that either you will consent to my proposal, or both you and your daughter will suffer the utmost consequence."

Vard's eyes had never left the speaker's face, nor had any color come back into his own. But at the last words he laughed contemptuously.

"It is useless," he sneered. "I am not one to be frightened."

"I am not trying to frighten you—I warn you."

"Your warning is useless. I reply to you in all seriousness that neither my

life, nor my daughter's life—no, nor the lives of a thousand like us—would persuade me to put this power in your hands. But you dare not kill me. In this brain, and there alone, is the great secret."

"You forget," Pachmann reminded him, "that in your baggage is a complete machine, which will soon be in our hands. We do not really need you."

At the words Vard burst into a shout of mad laughter. Pachmann watched him, and his face fell into haggard lines.

"So that is it!" jeered the inventor, when he had got his breath. "So that is the great plot! Well, Pachmann, to that I answer, 'Checkmate!' Did you think I would not foresee your treachery and guard against it? Go, get the baggage! You are welcome to all you find there!"

"You mean the machine is not there?" demanded Pachmann thickly.

"Just that."

"Where is it, then?"

Gazing into his adversary's bloodshot eyes, Vard had another burst of strangled laughter.

"I have already told you," he said. "In this brain—there alone—there alone!" His face was red now, strangely red, and his words were queerly jumbled.

Pachmann sat looking at him for a moment, then he rose.

"We shall soon see if you are speaking the truth," he said. "Whether you are or not makes no difference. If there is no machine in your baggage, you shall construct for us another."

"Oh, shall I!" screamed Vard, also springing to his feet. "Shall I! How good of you, that permission!"

"You shall construct another!" repeated Pachmann, between clenched teeth. "Oh, you will be glad to consent once I turn the screw! Come, prince."

He tapped at the door, and there came from outside the scrape of a sliding bolt. Then, standing aside for the prince to pass, he looked once at Vard, and turned to cross the threshold.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW.

It was a moment later that Kasia Vard, still sitting at the window staring out into the court, searching desperately through her brain for some plan of escape, was brought quivering to her feet by a shrill scream, followed by the sound of a terrible struggle on the floor above. There was a heavy tramping to and fro, the thud of falling furniture, a dull crash that shook the house—and then silence. It was over in a moment, but she stood rigid for a moment longer, her hands against her heart, then she flew to the door and wrenched at the knob.

The door did not yield. Panting with excitement, she snatched up a chair and drove it with all her strength against the lower panel. The chair flew to pieces in her hands, but the door held firm. And then, as she looked about for another weapon, she heard the sound of a sliding bolt, the door swung open, and Pachmann entered. He looked at her and at the broken chair, and smiled slightly.

"I come to reassure you, Miss Vard," he said, "since I suppose you must have heard the noise of our little combat. No one was injured; but your father, after a burst of rage at finding himself in our hands, during which we found it most difficult to control him, has had what appears to be an epileptic seizure. Is he subject to epilepsy?"

"I have known him to have two attacks," said Kasia, in a low voice, with a shuddering remembrance of the desperate crisis at which each had come.

"There is nothing to be done, I think, except to loosen his clothing and bathe his head and wrists?"

"No—that is all." Mechanically her hands were smoothing her disordered hair.

"And there is, of course, no danger. Nevertheless, you may wish to go to him."

"I do wish it."

"Then come with me," and he led the way up the stair. "Your father is in

there," he said, pointing to an inner room. "I will bring some water."

Kasia, with white face, passed into the inner room. Her father had been placed on a bed, and lay on his back, his eyes rolled up, breathing heavily. His hands were tightly clenched, but already the spasm was passing and the muscles relaxing. Almost at once Pachmann appeared at the door, handed her a basin of water, and then withdrew.

Under her ministrations, the breathing of the unconscious man grew softer and softer, the hands unclosed, the eyelids drooped, and finally his head fell over on one side and he slept. Kasia, watching him for a few moments, assured herself that all was well, then turned out the light, returned to the outer room, and closed the door.

Pachmann was sitting at the window, staring idly out at the deepening shadows. He arose at once at the sound of her entrance.

"Miss Vard," he said, "there is something I wish to say to you. Will you not sit down?" and he placed a chair for her. "What I have to say is most serious, and whatever your feeling of ill usage may be, I hope you will try to look at the matter also a little from my side. The situation is this: Your father, as you doubtless know, is the inventor of a mechanism which will make the nation possessing it mistress of the world. That nation must be Germany. Apart from my ambition for my country and my love of her, I believe that she is the nation best fitted to possess it. At any cost it must be hers—no cost can be too great; a hundred lives, a thousand lives, millions of treasure—all these would be sacrificed gladly, without hesitation. You understand?"

"Yes," said Kasia. "I think I understand."

"It is your father's dream, as I suppose you also know," Pachmann continued, "to bring about a world-wide peace by causing all nations to strike hands together in a sort of universal brotherhood. He demands that, to enter this brotherhood, Germany relin-

quish her share of Poland and restore Alsace and Lorraine to France. He requires, too, the virtual abdication of our ruling house. To such conditions Germany cannot consent. Rather than that we should prefer a hundred times the present status. For Germany has nothing to fear from the future.

"Now, Miss Vard, let me say at once that I regard your father's dream as a dream and nothing more. It cannot be realized. There is only one way in which world peace can be secured—let your father consent to place this power in our hands, and there will be no more war—or, at most, only one very short and decisive war. If your father is in earnest, if he is not mad, he will consent to this proposal. I need hardly add that, if he does consent, he has only to name his own reward—Germany will pay it gladly. Wealth, position, even the suzerainty of a nation—all this Germany is prepared to grant."

"You have placed this before him?" Kasia asked.

"Yes; it was placed before him at much greater length at our second conference."

"And he refused?"

"He refused. But we cannot take that refusal."

"Why do you tell me all this?"

"I tell you this, Miss Vard," answered Pachmann earnestly, "because I wish you to understand that in what may seem to you treachery and persecution, I am but fighting for my country. For her I hesitate at nothing. Then, too, I wish you to know what our position is. If you will think of it, I believe you will find it an honorable position, and one which will bring peace to the world, and quickly. I hope that, after full consideration, you will decide to speak to your father. Perhaps to you he might listen."

"No, he would not listen," said Kasia calmly; "and I shall not speak—or, if I do, it will be to urge him to continue to defy you. Do you imagine that any threat, any torture, could compel him to place the world at the mercy of your kaiser? You do not know him, Mr. Pachmann."

"That is your final answer?" Pachmann asked.

"Yes."

He rose.

"Then I shall have to request you to return to the room below."

"One moment, Mr. Pachmann," said Kasia. "I wonder if you realize how dangerous is this game you are playing? You are not in Germany; you cannot kidnap two people here in New York, even by the emperor's order, without some inquiry being made."

"Who will make it? No one knows that you were on the *Ottolie*; your room was empty, your names were not among the list of passengers; to all inquiries the reply will be made that you did not cross with the boat. No one knows that you are in New York."

"You are mistaken," retorted Kasia, her cheeks flushed. "One man knows. I am to meet him this evening."

"Ah, but when he finds you not at home, when he inquires of our company, he will conclude that you missed the boat."

"He will know better, because he crossed with us."

Pachmann stared at her, his brows contracted; then a slow smile broke across his lips.

"I remember now," he said. "I did, on one occasion, observe you talking to a young man. No doubt it is to him you refer."

"Yes—and he has a power at his disposal which even you may fear."

Pachmann chuckled.

"The power of the press, is it not?" he asked. "Be at rest, Miss Vard. He will not use it against us. He will walk into our net at seven o'clock this evening! You may be sure that now he will not be permitted to escape!"

In spite of herself, Kasia turned pale. Herself and her father she was prepared to sacrifice—they had played for a great stake, and had been outwitted. But Dan! That he, too, should be drawn into the whirlpool and sucked down and destroyed! She turned faint at the thought. Then she pulled herself up sharply, for Pachmann's gimlet eyes were upon her, glittering with

comprehension, reading her face, while on his own there was an expression of infernal triumph. She shivered as she looked at him.

"Have you anything else to say, Miss Vard?" he asked, with a leer.

"No," said Kasia, and turned to the door, anxious to hide her face, to escape from him, to be alone with her thoughts.

"Then please come with me."

She stepped first to the inner door, and glanced at her father. He was sleeping peacefully. Then she followed Pachmann down the stair. At the door of her room he paused.

"By the way, Miss Vard," he said, still leering, "it is useless for you to fatigue yourself by endeavoring to break this door. It is strengthened on the outside by a sheet of steel—behold!" He swung the door for her to see, then held it open for her. "I will have your dinner sent in to you," he added, and Kasia heard the bolts shot into place again.

Half an hour later a bearded giant in livery brought in a tray containing a very appetizing meal, set it on the table, and retired. Kasia realized suddenly that she was very hungry, for she had had nothing to eat since breakfast. There was certainly nothing to be gained by starving herself—that, she told herself with a shiver, might come later!—so she washed hands and face at the basin in the bathroom, straightened her hair, and at last sat down to the meal with a calmness which surprised even herself. She ate deliberately and well, and when, at last, she pushed her cup away, it was with a sense of renewed strength and courage.

Once more she examined the room minutely, but there was no exit save by the steel-lined door. The window remained, but it opened into that well-like court, with walls surmounted by bristling iron. Yet she was strong and agile; perhaps—perhaps—

She snapped out the light, went to the open window, and peered out. It was very dark in the shadow of those walls, but she remembered precisely how it looked; she remembered the

door opening into the basement, just beneath her window. If it should, by any chance, be unlocked! But that was foolish to expect. Perhaps it would be possible to twist a rope from the bedclothes and throw it up over the chevaux-de-frise; but even then there would be a long hand-over-hand climb to accomplish; and the barbed and pointed spikes had looked very formidable. In any event, she had the whole night before her; she must not act hastily; she must wait and watch; perhaps some other means would present itself; perhaps Dan—

And then the pain of recollection stabbed through her. Dan could do nothing; Dan was to be himself entrapped; and yet, how could that be? Perhaps Pachmann was lying—and yet he had not seemed to be lying. He had spoken confidently, triumphantly, gloatingly.

She sat erect, listening, then stole to the door, and placed one ear against it. There were steps in the hall outside, steps which passed, which mounted the stair.

Perhaps that was Dan; yes, it must be after seven o'clock.

She forced herself to sit again at the window, but her hands were trembling. She stared out into the shadows of the little court and tried to think. But thinking was so difficult; there was a dull ache at the back of her eyes, and her throat felt dry and swollen. One thought ran through her mind, over and over: Dan must not be sacrificed, Dan must not suffer, even if Germany must triumph.

Then suddenly from overhead came the sound of a sharp scuffle and a heavy fall. She fancied she could hear voices raised in anger. The slam of a door echoed through the house. A moment later came a series of savage blows, of rending crashes, as though the house itself was being torn to pieces—and then silence.

Kasia stood as though turned to stone, listening, listening. Was it Dan? Was it her father? What was happening in that room upstairs? What did that sudden silence mean? Her im-

agation pictured frightful things. And then, from overhead, she heard the pacing of swift feet, up and down, up and down; back and forth a hundred times, as though driven by some raging spirit, scourging, scourging. And then again silence.

Horrible as the sounds had been, the silence frightened her still more; it was filled with menace, it was charged with terror. Movement, sound—those meant life, at least; silence might mean anything—might mean death!

She could endure it no longer. She ran wildly into the other room, and flung herself face downward on the bed, covering her ears, burying her eyes in the pillow.

But the terror passed, and at last she rolled over and stared up into the darkness and tried again to think. She must, must, must escape! Once free, once in the street, she could summon aid, could raise the town, could storm the house! But to escape! She pressed her hands to her aching temples.

And then a sound from the outer room brought her upright; she listened with bated breath, pressing her hands against her breast to still the beating of her heart. There it was again—stealthy, scraping—

Slowly, cautiously, she stole to the door of the bedroom; the noise again; and the sound of heavy breathing. And then her heart leaped suffocatingly, for there against the gray light of the window was silhouetted the figure of a man. In frantic terror she sprang for the switch, found it after an instant's frenzied groping, and turned on the lights. The sudden flare blinded her; then her straining eyes saw who stood there.

"Dan!" she cried. "Dan!"

He was standing on the window sill, steadyng himself by a knotted sheet secured somewhere overhead, and at the sound of her voice he reeled and nearly fell. Then, with a face like ivory, he stooped and peered in under the raised sash, rubbed his eyes, looked a second time, and, with a low cry, sprang into the room.

"Kasia!"

She was in his arms—close, oh, close to his heart!

"Oh, Dan, Dan!" she sobbed. "I'm so glad—so glad!"

And she kissed him with trembling lips.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VOICE AT THE DOOR.

It was nearly nine o'clock when Pachmann sat down to dinner that evening, but he did so in an exceedingly pleasant frame of mind. He felt that he had done a good day's work. In the first place, he had eluded the spies; in the second place, he had enticed all the flies into the web, where they were now securely entangled. There was just one way in which they could regain their freedom, and that they would, in the end, accept that way the admiral did not doubt:

Protests were natural at first; inevitable, indeed, until their indignation at the trick played upon them had subsided somewhat; it was also inevitable that there should be some heroics, some talk of honor, self-sacrifice, and such tomfoolery. But these vaporings would soon come to an end; a few hours of sober reflection would work wonders in dissipating them. And if there was need, why, it would always be possible to apply the screw—the screw of hunger, the screw of solitary confinement, the screw of sleeplessness, of fear, of anxiety—and to turn it gently, gently. Oh, victory was certain now!

So Pachmann rubbed his hands together, mentally, at least, and enjoyed his dinner immensely. It was a good dinner, but it did not seem to appeal to Pachmann's table companion. That was the prince, summoned from his room, where he had sulkily immured himself, and obeying from force of habit; but, strangely enough, his appetite, which was of a magnitude and reliability characteristic of the Hohenzollerns, had evidently failed him now. He trifled gloomily with the food, and drank more wine than was good for him, without any perceptible resultant lightening of spirit.

Plainly something was seriously wrong, but if the prince expected the admiral to make any anxious inquiries about his health, or to express regret for the scene of an hour before, he was disappointed. Beyond cocking an amused eye at him, now and again, the admiral took no notice of him. So it was the prince who had to open the conversation, which he did as soon as the servants had withdrawn.

"Admiral Pachmann," he began, with heavy dignity, "I did not like the way in which this evening you spoke of me. It appeared to me almost insulting."

"Insulting, your highness!" protested the admiral. "You astonish me. I imagined myself speaking most respectfully."

"It was insulting," repeated the prince doggedly.

"Surely you misunderstood me!" said the admiral, with deep concern. "Let me see—what was it I said? I do not remember the exact words, but it was to the effect, was it not, that your health was threatened by overstudy, and that the emperor had instructed you to take a vacation?"

"There was more than that."

"I emphatically denied that there was any truth in that absurd rumor about the barmaid."

"She was not a barmaid."

The admiral laughed.

"Was she not? Then I was misinformed. But that is a detail."

"In addition to which," pursued the prince, rather red in the face with the knowledge that he was getting the worst of it, "I do not consider that you are behaving honorably in this matter."

"In what way?"

"You brought Miss Vard and her father here, promising to give them an answer."

"And I gave them an answer, did I not?"

"Yes—and then proceeded to imprison them."

"I have no recollection of having promised not to do so."

"But they trusted you."

"The more fools they!"

"They must be released," said the prince firmly. "I command it!"

Pachmann selected a cigar from the tray on the table with great care. Then he lighted it, took a slow puff or two, and looked at the prince.

"Ah, you command it!" he said thoughtfully.

"Yes," repeated the prince, "I command it!"

"How I wish," sighed the admiral, "that my heart was as young as yours, my prince! I would give much to bring that about! But, alas! it has long since grown indifferent to red lips and bright eyes; this old heart of mine has been hardened by forty years of service; it is capable now of only one passion—but that is a fierce one."

"And what is that?" the prince inquired.

"The passion for my country and for my king!" said the admiral, and saluted. "My house is not a great one, as you have had occasion to remind me, but it is loyal. Its motto is, 'I love and I obey.' I love my country as I have loved no woman; for her I would give my life, my honor, and rejoice to do it! And for my king, as you have seen, I hesitate at nothing! Prince, you must learn your lesson; I trust it will not be too bitter."

"To what lesson do you refer?" asked the prince, impressed in spite of himself, as he gazed at the glowing face opposite him.

"The lesson that never, never must red lips or bright eyes make you false to your country or to your house, even in thought. You command that I release these people at the moment when I touch success. And why? Because you have been impressed with a girl's face."

"It is a lie!" shouted the prince, and started to his feet.

The admiral did not stir, only looked at him; but there was in his eyes a frigid anger which turned the prince cold. In vain he tried to avoid those eyes; they drew his, as a snake's draws a bird's.

"I beg your pardon, Admiral Pachmann," he stammered, at last. "It may

be, in part, at least, the truth. But it is not the whole truth. You do me injustice. Putting the girl aside, I yet think you should release them. Germany does not behave dishonorably, even to her enemies."

"All is fair in war," retorted the admiral. "For what purpose do you imagine that Germany maintains this house, with its grated windows and steel-lined doors and heavy bolts, as of a prison? For just such purposes as this! For the detention of her enemies. And it has been used many times! And now," he added, in a voice suddenly as hard as steel, "as a reparation for your insult, I will ask you to return at once to the consulate, to go to your apartment, and to remain there until I see you in the morning."

White with humiliation, the prince bowed, and stalked from the room. A moment later the slam of the front door denoted that he had left the house. Pachmann sat for a moment longer, his lips curled in a sardonic smile. Then he touched a bell. A burly fellow in livery answered it.

"Arm yourself," said Pachmann, "and bring your comrade."

The man was back again in a moment, bringing another giant with him. Each had, strapped about his waist, an ammunition belt from which depended in its holster a heavy revolver. They saluted and stood at attention, while the admiral looked them over.

"You will stand guard in the lower hall to-night," he said at last. "Turn and turn about, one sleeping on the floor at the stairfoot, and with the hall fully lighted. Under no pretext will you permit any one to enter the house or leave it. In case of any disturbance, of any suspicious circumstance, you will summon me at once. You have revolvers—do not hesitate to use them in case of need—even against a woman. You understand? Good! Has there some baggage come?"

"Two pieces, sir."

"Clear the table and bring it up to me."

He leaned back and finished his cigar, while the men clumsily cleared

the table and placed two battered suit cases upon it.

"The servants who prepared the dinner have departed?" the admiral asked.

"They departed some time ago, sir."

"You are sure that all doors and windows are secured?"

"We have just made the round, sir."

"And the young lady?"

"We have heard nothing from her, sir."

"The young man?"

"I glanced in at him, sir, some time ago. He was lying on his bed, with his eyes closed, but I do not think he slept."

"Did he have dinner?"

"We had no orders to that effect, sir."

"Good; let him go hungry. You will serve him no food until I order it. To your posts now, and remember, as you value your lives, let no one in or out."

They saluted and withdrew.

Pachmann turned to a leisurely examination of the suit cases. They were unlocked, and he soon found the queer box with sides of glass lined with tinfoil. He snatched it up eagerly, but after a glance at it, his face fell.

"So he was telling the truth!" he muttered. "Well, so much the worse for him!"

Nevertheless he examined the box attentively, with minute concentration, noting the arrangement of the interior plates, the scheme of wiring—each detail. Then, with it in his hand, he left the room, saw that his men were on guard, mounted to the upper story, unbolted a door there, and entered. Closing the door carefully behind him, he switched on the lights, placed the box on the table, and entered the room beyond. Here, too, he turned on the lights, and stood for a moment contemplating the occupant of the bed, who returned his gaze steadily, with glittering eyes.

"You are awake, then, my dear Vard?" said the admiral at last.

"As you see."

"You are feeling better, I trust?"

"I am quite well."

"You have had dinner?"

"I cared for none."

"I wish to talk with you for a few minutes."

"It would be a waste of time."

Pachmann paused to look again at the glittering eyes, and the thought flashed through his mind, as it had done more than once before, that he had to do with a madman. An inspired genius, perhaps, but mad, nevertheless. Pachmann knew that there was about madness a certain childishness, and he determined to humor it now.

"For you, perhaps, it would be a waste of time," he said, approaching the bed and sitting down; "but not for me. My lifework has been the study of electrical energy as applied to war, and I fancied myself fairly well informed, when suddenly you come and prove to me that I know nothing. That morning, ten days since, when I stood on the quay at Toulon and saw a great battleship reduced to a twisted wreck, I realized my ignorance, and my heart glowed with admiration for you, my master."

"Yes, I am your master," and Vard raised himself upon one elbow. "Even here, your prisoner, I am still your master."

"I admit it. And I have a proposal to make to you."

"I have no confidence in your proposals."

"Yet listen to this one: Place this power at the emperor's service, and he will name you ruler of any nation you choose—of this one, if it pleases you—and leave you to rule it as seems best to you, without interference of any kind. Think, my friend, what a destiny—free to embody your own ideas in the government of what is in some ways the greatest nation on earth; free to make a paradise here, if you can. And if you succeed, your dream comes true, for all the other nations of the world will follow."

Vard gazed at the speaker with wistful eyes.

"It *could* come true," he said. "It *could* come true; it could not fail. But you are too blind, too selfish, too narrow. You are only a German."

"And you?"

"I am a Pole—that is to say, a citizen of no country and of every one!"

"But you love that country, even though it does not exist?"

"Aye—more than you love yours."

Pachmann was silent a moment, thinking deeply.

"Listen, my friend," he said, at last. "I desire to meet you; I will come along the road toward you as far as I am able."

"Yes?"

"I agree to reconstitute Poland. You shall have a country again, and shall be its ruler, if you choose."

The eyes of the inventor gleamed for an instant; and then the gleam faded, and he shook his head.

"You have betrayed me once," he said. "You will betray me again. I will never place this power in your hands, nor in those of your emperor. Dismiss that hope from your mind. I ask only one thing of you—my freedom and that of my daughter."

"And if I consent?"

"I will offer my services to France."

Pachmann's face flushed.

"You are *not* mad, Monsieur Vard," Mad!"

"You are mad!" he cried. "Mad! said a pleasant voice at the threshold. "And you have your freedom. France accepts your services!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CROCHARD THE INVINCIBLE.

Pachmann jerked round with an oath, shaking as with the palsy. At the first glance, he thought it was the prince who stood there, though it had not been the prince's voice. A second glance undeceived him. There was, it is true, a certain puzzling resemblance to the prince, but this man was more strongly built, more graceful—and the prince could never smile like that! And then, with a little bow, the newcomer removed the broad-brimmed hat which shadowed his face, and, with a sudden feeling of sickness, Pachmann recognized him.

But the admiral was a brave man,

with a nerve not easily shaken; besides, the odds were all in his favor! Yet he realized the need for all his resource, all his self-control. At the end of a moment he rose slowly, almost carelessly.

"Who are you, sir?" he demanded.

"Do you not know me?" laughed the stranger. "Surely, yes! I saw your eyes penetrate this slight disguise. I crossed with you on the *Ottolie*, admiral, as André Chevrial. I believe you even did me the honor to convince yourself that that was really my name. I am, however, better known in Paris as Crochard L'Invincible!"

"Ah," said Pachmann, with a tightening of the brows; "a spy, then?"

"No, admiral; a patriot like yourself."

"And your business here?"

"I have already stated it—to accept for France the services of this incomparable man."

Something flashed in Pachmann's hand, but even as he jerked up his arm, there was a soft impact, and a revolver clattered to the floor. Chevrial sprang for it, seized it, and slipped it into his pocket.

"I was expecting that," he said, still smiling. "Now we can talk more at our ease," and he came into the bedroom, closed the door, placed a chair against it, and sat down.

Pachmann, white with pain, was nursing a numbed and nerveless hand.

"You should admire this weapon, admiral," Crochard went on, extending for his inspection what looked like an ordinary revolver. "It is a most useful toy, of my own invention—or, perhaps, I would better say, adapted by me from an invention of that ingenious Sieur Hyacinthe, who was pistol maker to the great Louis. Should you ever visit Paris, I should be charmed to show you the original at the Carnavalet. This embodies some improvements of my own. It can, as you have seen, discharge, almost noiselessly, a disabling ball; it can also, not quite so noiselessly, discharge a bullet which will penetrate your body, and which no bone will stop or turn aside. Should you open your

mouth to shout, I can, still with this little implement, fling into your face a liquid which will strike you senseless before your shout can come, or a poison a single breath of which means death. And I assure you, my dear admiral, that I shall hesitate no more than you to use any of these agencies which may be necessary."

Pachmann listened, glowering; but, he told himself, he was not yet defeated; and he sat rubbing his hand and measuring his adversary.

"What do you imagine to be the exact nature of the services of which you speak?" he asked at last.

"Their nature? Why, their nature will be of the same sort as those already offered to your emperor."

"Yes?"

"The position of leader in the movement for world-wide disarmament," said Crochard, and smiled as Pachmann's lips whitened. "Ah, my dear admiral, your emperor is too selfish, too ambitious—he has, as an English poet puts it, that ambition which overleaps itself. He should have accepted the arrangement which Monsieur Vard proposed. That would have been glory enough. But no; he must dream of being a greater than Napoleon, of world empire; and in consequence he will lose that which he already has. But I foresaw it; I foresaw it from the moment Monsieur Vard stipulated that Alsace-Lorraine must be returned to France. I knew that your emperor would not consent to that restitution!"

Pachmann raised his head slowly.

"So it was you who listened at the door that night?" he said.

"Yes, it was I. And it was I who discovered that you and Admiral von Tirpitz waited for sunrise, one Monday morning, on the quay at Toulon. For that, France must have revenge."

Crochard's eyes were gleaming now, and there was no smile upon his lips. Instead there was in his face a deadly earnestness, a fierce hatred, before which Pachmann shrank a little.

"She shall have it!" cried a voice from the bed. "She shall have it!"

Vard was sitting erect now, arrang-

ing his clothing with trembling hands, and his eyes, too, were shining.

"You hear?" said Crochard, and then he smiled again: "Ah, my dear admiral, it was a mistake to insist upon that test! It could have been made, just as well, upon some old hulk of your own—and then France would have had nothing for which to exact vengeance! I pity you, for it is you who have brought this retribution to your country. From first to last you have behaved like a fool in this affair. It was you who betrayed her!"

"I?" stammered Pachmann. "I? In what way? By what means?"

"By means of the hundred-franc note with which you paid your reckoning at the inn at Toulon. That was careless, admiral; it was not like you. You should have carried gold, not paper—that would have told no secrets. And then, when you gave our friend here a packet of similar notes—I do not see how you could expect to escape, after that."

Pachmann struck his forehead heavily with his open hand.

"So it was that!" he groaned. "So it was that! Yes, I was a fool!"

There was pity in the gaze which Crochard bent upon him. He could guess what this good German suffered at that moment.

"That was not your fault," he said, "so much as that of the person who supplied you with those notes, after getting them directly from the Bank of France. But at this end of the journey, how clumsy you were! All that haste, all that circling—and for nothing!"

"You followed us, then?"

"Why, no!" laughed Crochard. "I had no need to follow you—though that would not have been difficult! I had only to be at your consulate at seven o'clock."

Pachmann could only stare.

"The appointment was made on the open deck," said Crochard. "I was expecting it, and my ears are sharp. Well, I was there at that hour, as well as Monsieur Webster—and you led me straight here. That was careless! That

was clumsy! After that you deserved to fail."

"How did you enter here?" asked Pachmann hoarsely. "My men—are they——"

"They are on guard below, no doubt. But their eyes are not so keen as yours, nor their ears so sharp—and then my imitation of the prince's voice and manner was very good. I admit I kept my face somewhat in the shadow. They passed me without question."

Pachmann, with sudden intentness, scanned the other's garments.

"Yes, they, at least, are genuine," laughed Crochard. "The prince was most indignant at having to remove them. My heart bled for him—but there was no other way. Beyond a little tightness across the shoulders, and a little looseness about the waist, they do very well."

"The prince is a prisoner?" Pachmann asked.

"A hostage—to be released when I give the word. You should warn him to choose his cabs more carefully—never, in a strange city, to take the first that offers."

"Then," said Pachmann, his face livid, "you have confederates—you are not alone!"

"I have friends," Crochard assented, "who were happy to oblige me by taking charge of the prince. More than that I did not ask of them."

"You mean," asked Pachmann, almost in a whisper, "that you are alone here?"

"Quite alone, my dear admiral," Crochard assured him, and smiled pleasantly.

Pachmann regarded the speaker for another moment; then he drew a deep breath, and a little color crept back into his cheeks.

"Monsieur Crochard," he said, "or whatever may be your name, I admire your dexterity and your daring. I wish Germany possessed a few such men as you. Nothing, I suppose, would tempt you—no wealth, no position?"

"I am a Frenchman, monsieur," answered Crochard quietly.

Pachmann sighed.

"I see I must abandon that project. I am sorry. For, let me warn you, all your dexterity, all your daring, cannot get you alive out of this house. If the prince is a hostage for your safety, then he must be sacrificed. So far as my own life is concerned, it is nothing. I have two men below who, at a shout from me, or at the report of the shot which kills me, will shoot you down as you attempt to descend the stair. That is my order. There is from this house but one way out—the door by which you entered. You may kill me—I shall welcome that!—but you yourself will infallibly be killed a moment later."

"That may be," said Crochard lightly, "but I am not so sure of it. At any rate, if Monsieur Vard is ready, I am prepared to make the trial."

"I am ready!" cried the inventor, and sprang to his feet.

Crochard rose and moved the chair from before the door. Pachmann, with a steady eye, measured the distance between himself and the Frenchman.

But Vard, his eyes blazing, stepped in front of the admiral.

"So this is your reward!" he sneered. "You, who would have betrayed me, who would have made me infamous, shall yourself be infamous! Now it is France's turn—for her I will produce a new instrument——"

"That is not necessary, Monsieur Vard," broke in Crochard. "There need not be even that small delay. I have the old one here," and he tapped the pocket of his coat.

"The old one!" echoed Vard. "But Kasia destroyed it!"

"It was not destroyed. I will explain. Are you quite ready? Then pass out before me, and await me in the outer room."

Still staring, Vard opened the door. Then he sprang to the table with a glad cry, and caught up the box which stood there.

"It is complete again!" he cried. "It is——"

With a hoarse shout, Pachmann leaped at Crochard's throat. But, in mid-air, a spatter of liquid broke

against his face, and his body hurtled onward to the floor.

And then, from the floor below, came an answering shout, a shot, the clatter of heavy feet.

With shining eyes, Crochard dropped on one knee beside his adversary, and bent for a moment above the body. Then he sprang to his feet and switched off the light.

"Stand here!" he said, and snatched the inventor to one side, then stood facing the outer door.

But it did not open. No further sound reached them.

"Cowards!" muttered Crochard. "They wait in ambush! Well, let us see," and, stealing to the door, he opened it softly, softly, bracing his knee against it.

Still there was no sound.

Cautiously he peered out. The hall was empty.

Noiselessly he crawled to the stair-head and looked down. He could see no one. But where were Pachmann's men? Hiding somewhere in the hall below, waiting for him to appear——

He drew back with a little exclamation, for from somewhere below came the groan of a man in pain.

For a moment Crochard sat with bewildered face, trying to understand. Then he sprang to his feet, and went rapidly from door to door in the upper hall. All of them were guarded with heavy outside bolts, but only one was fastened. He drew the bolts and opened the door a crack.

"Is any one here?" he asked.

There was no response, and, feeling for the switch, he turned on the lights and looked in. The room was empty. But in an instant his eye had seen three details—the shattered furniture, the disordered bed, the open window.

At the window, the corner of a sheet was tied securely to a hinge of the heavy shutter, which had been pried open. Crochard touched it thoughtfully and nodded. Then he peered down into the well-like court on which the window opened. But he could see no movement there.

He retraced his steps to the hall, and

again peered cautiously from the stair-head, and again heard that dismal groaning.

"Come," he murmured; "there is not much to fear from that fellow!" and resolutely descended, eyes alert, pistol in hand. Halfway down, he stopped in amazement, for the front door swung wide open. But at last he finished the descent and looked about him.

Against the wall back of the stairs sat a burly figure, one hand pressed to his shoulder. A red stream oozed between his fingers, and his dull eyes showed that he was only half conscious. He was groaning spasmodically with each breath. Across from him was an open door, and looking cautiously through it, Crochard perceived on the floor of the room beyond a second burly figure, motionless on its back.

"Upon my word!" he commented. "That young fellow does his work well! A charming exploit! But we must not be found here!" And without waiting to see more, he sprang back up the stair. Vard was standing where he had left him, his beloved box clasped tightly against his breast, his eyes staring straight before him, vacant and expressionless.

"Come," said Crochard, and took his hand. "The way is clear. But we must hasten."

Vard went with him down the stair; but at the foot he paused.

"And Kasia?" he asked.

"She is safe. Come, we will go to her."

And obediently as a child the white-haired man followed his companion out into the night.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ESCAPE.

That evening remains in Dan Webster's memory as the most crowded and most glorious of his life. Its supreme moment was when Kasia Vard gave herself into his arms and raised her lips to his, and it left them both dazzled and breathless; but at last they were able to speak coherently.

"So you are a prisoner, too?" Dan asked.

"Yes."

"I suspected it. How splendid that I have found you!"

"It was silly of me to be frightened—I might have known it was you!"

"How could you have known?"

"Admiral Pachmann told me he had set a trap for you."

Dan glanced about the room quickly.

"They must not know I am here," he said, lowering his voice.

Kasia sprang to the switch and snapped out the lights. Then she took him by the hand and led him to a couch in one corner of the room.

"If we sit here," she said, "and speak very low, no one can hear us."

They sat down, but some moments passed before the conversation was resumed.

"Now we must be sensible," she said, drawing away from him. "They may go into your room at any moment, or come in here."

"That's true," Dan agreed. And then he remembered. "Kasia," he said hoarsely, "some one stole the box, after all!"

- He heard her quick gasp of dismay.

"Not Pachmann!" she cried.

"No, not Pachmann; I don't know who it could have been, unless it was that fellow Chevrial," and he told her the whole story.

She listened silently, pressing his hand from time to time as he told of his anxiety for her.

"I know I was an awful chump," he concluded, "to let Chevrial put it over me like that. Once we're out of here, I'm going to scour New York for him."

"You mustn't take it so to heart," she protested, pressing his hand. "It wasn't any fault of yours; besides, it doesn't matter so much, since it wasn't Pachmann! Perhaps we can get it back. Come," she added, "the first thing is to escape. Perhaps we can get over the wall."

"It looked pretty formidable," said Dan, "but I don't see what else we can do. We can't fight our way out—I haven't anything to fight with!"

"No, that is too dangerous!" agreed Kasia quickly. "There's a regular giant of a man on guard out there."

"Two of them," said Dan. "I was an infant in their hands. Did you hear me smashing things? There isn't much of the furniture left—and it did me good!"

"I did some smashing myself," laughed Kasia; "there are the pieces of a chair over there by the wall."

Dan laughed in sympathy, with a heart surprisingly light. After all, it was impossible to be either worried or frightened with her there beside him.

"I'll go down and reconnoiter the wall," he said. "How far is the pavement below your window?"

"Ten or twelve feet."

"I'll need more rope."

"My bedclothes," she said. "We can make a rope from them."

She ran into the bedroom, drew the blind at the window, and then turned on the light.

"No one can see us in here," she said, and began to strip the covers from the bed. "Come in and shut the door, and they can't hear us, either."

Dan paused an instant at the threshold; then entered and closed the door.

"We can make a perfectly lovely rope of these," went on Kasia, her face shining. "I happen to know how—we teach plaiting in our kindergarten on the East Side. First we must tear them into strips."

At this Dan helped her, and then the plaiting began. In twenty minutes as many feet of rough but serviceable rope was done.

"Suppose I take a look around the court," Dan suggested, "while you finish the plaiting. We'll need a lot of rope, if we have to go over the wall, but perhaps there's some other way out."

She went with him to the window, watched him as he tied the rope to the shutter hinge, tested it to make sure that it was safe, and kissed him before he swung himself off. Then she leaned far over the sill and looked down into his upturned face, all her love in her eyes. A moment he hung there, gazing

raptly up at her, then slipped down into the darkness; and Kasia, with brimming heart, returned to her task.

A very few minutes sufficed for Dan to convince himself that the only way of escape from the court lay over the wall. He found the door opening into the basement of the house, but it was a strong one, and securely bolted, as a pressure of the shoulder proved; and there was no other entrance. The wall itself was not encouraging, for it was at least twelve feet high, and at the top was that formidable iron defense. It might be possible to throw their rope over one of the barbed points, pull himself up, and draw Kasia up after him. Men had accomplished far more difficult things than that to gain freedom!

He groped for the rope, found it, and mounted hand-over-hand to the window sill, threw his arm over it, drew himself up—and hung there, paralyzed, staring at what lay within.

Through the open door of the bedroom poured a stream of light, and beyond, on the bed, sat Kasia, her head bent, her fingers busy with the strips of cloth; and in the darkness of the outer room, peering in at her, was dimly outlined a huge and threatening figure. Dan could see the profile of the bearded face, half turned away from him. Then slowly, slowly, it drew closer to the bedroom door—

With teeth set and heart flaming, Dan drew himself quickly upon the sill, stepped lightly into the room, and crouched in the shadow of the table. Had the giant heard? He peeped out cautiously. No, he was still intent upon the working girl. But a weapon—he must have a weapon—and Dan's agonized glance, sweeping the room, fell upon the débris of the broken chair. Quickly he crept to it, and his fingers closed about one of the heavy legs.

Then, as he turned to seek the shelter of the table, Kasia glanced up and saw that bearded face. Terror froze the smile upon her lips; terror drained the strength from her limbs; terror strangled the cry in her throat:

"Dan—Dan—Dan!"

And Dan, flaming with such rage as

he had never known before, sprang upright, sprang forward, and, rising on tiptoe to get the whole weight of his body into it, brought his club whirring down upon that shaggy head.

Like a log the man fell, with a crash that echoed through the house, and instantly from the hallway came a hoarse shout, the rush of heavy feet.

In that instant, Dan was possessed by a curious clairvoyance; he could see Kasia, he could see his victim, he could see the room behind him, he could see the hall with the other guard running along it; he knew somehow that there was a pistol in the belt of the man who lay at his feet, and, without conscious will of his own, his hand found it and jerked it out.

That other figure had reached the threshold, and Dan was conscious of his red face and staring eyes and open mouth. He was conscious of a hairy hand closing on a pistol butt, and, again without willing it, he jerked his own hand up and fired.

And the next moment, with one arm about Kasia, he threw back the bolts of the front door, flung it open, and fled down the steps into the street.

That was all Dan ever remembered of those fierce moments. They appeared to him afterward as a series of tableaux, each standing distinctly by itself, an instant in time without connection with the past or with the future, and he felt himself to be, not an actor in them, but a puppet moved by wires. It was as though his brain had leaped from one mountaintop to another, across intervening valleys buried in fog.

But the instant his feet touched the pavement, the instant the fight was won, his will asserted itself, and his brain began again to work connectedly. And the first thing he remembered doing was holding up his hand and staring at it, astonished that it did not hold a pistol. He had no recollection of having dropped it.

"We must get help!" Kasia panted. "My father is there!"

"The prince and Pachmann are there, too," said Dan. "Perhaps others." He looked up and down the street. "I

wonder where we are? There's the elevated. Come along."

Together they sped to the nearest corner. It proved to be Ninth Avenue, and there, in the shadow of the elevated, they found a policeman on duty.

It is true that Dan was not as coherent as he might have been, and that the story he told sounded like a pipe dream; but the policeman was undeniably slow of comprehension. At first he smiled good-naturedly.

"Aw, youse run along home now," he said. "I'm onto youse!"

"But look here," Dan protested; "this is serious. I'm not drunk—I'm just excited and scared. Now, listen. There's a man held prisoner back yonder by a lot of Germans, and I shot one of them and knocked another down—and we've got to get him free."

"Tut, tut!" said the officer, and then he looked at Dan closely, and then he looked at Kasia, and then he took off his helmet and scratched his head. "Look here, now," he said finally, "I'll call headquarters, if you say so—but if you're stringin' me—"

"I'm not stringing you!" Dan cried. "And for Heaven's sake be quick! Every minute we waste—"

The passers-by had begun to stop and stare curiously, and the thought flashed through Dan's mind that he might collect a posse—

But the patrolman had made up his mind.

"Come along with me," he said, and led the way into the rear room of the corner drug store, and telephoned to his station for instructions. He enlarged somewhat upon the perils of the expedition, as Dan had recounted them, and when he came out of the booth it was with a distinctly relieved air.

"The sergeant says for us to wait here," he said, "and he'll rush some detectives up right away."

"But we can't stay here," Dan cried. "We've got to get back!"

"When the sergeant tells me to do a thing, I do it," said the officer composedly. "So I'm goin' to stay right here."

Dan glared at him for a moment, and

started to speak his mind, but thought better of it.

"Any objection to my waiting in front of the house?" he asked.

The officer pondered a moment.

"No, I guess not. Right down this street, you said?"

"Yes; I didn't notice the number, but it's about halfway of the block. I'll be waiting."

"All right. Skip along."

"I'm going, too," said Kasia.

Dan started to object—the danger was not over yet—but she was already at the door.

"Take the other side of the street," he called.

She nodded, crossed the street, and sped along in the shadow. In a moment they were opposite the house. Nothing apparently had changed there. The front door stood open as they had left it, with the light from the hall streaming out over the steps. The hall, so far as they could see, was empty. There was no one on the stairs.

Dan gazed at all this for a moment; then he shivered a little; he did not understand the emptiness and silence; and he was suffering with the reaction from those crowded moments.

"I don't like it," he said. "Where's Pachmann?"

"Perhaps he's not there."

Dan stood staring a moment longer, then swung round at her.

"I'm going to see," he said. "It was foolish to run away like that. I'm ashamed of myself. Wait for me here."

He crossed the street and mounted the steps. As he stepped into the hall, a groan arrested him. In a moment he perceived the man whom he had shot lying half conscious against the wall. In the room beyond, the other man was sitting up, rubbing his head and staring stupidly about him. Dan took one look at him, then closed the door and bolted it:

"And that's all right!" he said, and turned to find Kasia at his elbow. He glared at her sternly. "I thought I told you to wait outside," he said.

"With you in danger! What do you take me for?"

Dan took one look into the shining eyes, then put his arm about her, dragged her to him, and kissed her fiercely.

"Refreshment for the heroic warrior on the field of battle," he explained, before she could protest. "I don't think there's much danger, but just the same you'll stay well in the rear, like a good girl. If Pachmann's upstairs, we're likely to hear from him."

"Can't we do something for this poor fellow?" she asked, her eyes large with pity for the groaning man.

"The police will call an ambulance," said Dan. "There's nothing we can do." On the floor beside the wounded man lay his revolver, and Dan stooped and picked it up. "Now, remember, Gunga Din!" he added, "your place is fifty paces right flank rear!"

He started up the stair, cautiously at first, but more boldly as no sound came from the upper floor. At the stairhead he hesitated. The upper hall was empty, but just opposite him an open door disclosed a dark room beyond. Still there was no sound, and, after a moment, he stepped to the door and peered inside.

"That was where they put my father," said Kasia. "He was lying on the bed in there."

Before he could stop her, she brushed past him and sped across the room. Then, with a frightened cry, she started back. Dan was by her side in an instant.

"Look!" she gasped, and pointed at the floor.

Dan saw a dim shape stretched across the inner threshold; then he perceived that it was the body of a man. Pushing Kasia before him, he returned to the outer door, fumbled for the switch, and turned it. Yes, it was the body of a man, lying on its face, its arms thrown above its head. A strange odor greeted him as he bent above it—an odor which made him curiously dizzy—but he managed to turn the body over.

"Why, it's Pachmann!" he cried, and stared down at him with starting eyes.

It was not a pleasant sight. The

admiral's face was distorted with rage, his lips curled savagely away from his teeth, his eyes were only half closed, his hands were clenched—and with it all he was breathing slow and regularly, as though asleep.

"He isn't dead, anyway," said Dan, and rubbed his eyes, for strange clouds floated before them. "And he doesn't seem to be hurt," he added, looking again. "I wonder what happened to him—he isn't a pretty sight, is he? And where's your father?"

"He's not here," said Kasia, and, following her gesture, Dan saw that the bed was empty.

Together they hastened back to the hall and looked into the other rooms. They were all empty.

"Well, it beats me!" said Dan at last, and stared down into the girl's frightened face. "Your father isn't here, that's sure. It looks like he either gave Pachmann his quietus with a solar plexus, or else Pachmann just fell over on his face and went to sleep. Anyway, your father seems to have escaped. But where's the prince? Did they run away together?"

"But why didn't father stop and look for me?" demanded Kasia.

And then a light broke over Dan's face.

"He did—and found you gone. Don't you see," he went on excitedly, "it must have been while we were fussing with that thick-headed policeman. And probably, when he didn't find you, he hurried on home——"

But Kasia had already started for the stairs.

Dan paused for a last look at the re-cumbent figure. Suppose the man should die—suppose something had happened to the prince—there would be the German empire to be reckoned with, and the reckoning would be a serious one—serious for himself, for Kasia, above all for Vard! Very thoughtfully he turned away, followed Kasia down the stair, passed along the hall, and through the open door. On the top step he paused and looked up and down the street. The police were not yet in sight.

With a little smile Dan turned and pulled the door shut. Then he ran down the steps after his companion.

"Let's go the other way," he said, as she turned toward Ninth Avenue. "We may as well keep out of this. We can get the subway just below here."

And in another moment they had turned the corner.

Wherefore it happened that, when the patrolman, in company with three detectives, who had been torn away from a game of pinochle, and who were consequently in no very pleasant humor, reached the center of the block, some five minutes later, there was no one in sight.

"He said he'd wait for us," said the patrolman helplessly.

The detectives looked about them, but there was no evidence of anything unusual about any of the houses.

"Which side of the street was it on?" one of them asked.

"He didn't say," answered the patrolman.

"Well, what *did* he say?"

"Blamed if I know exactly. He was so worked up—with his eyes stickin' out, and his jaw shakin', and the girl hangin' on to his arm—but it was something about kidnapin', and shootin' a man, and there bein' another prisoner to rescue——"

He stopped, for there was frank incredulity in the three pairs of eyes fastened upon him.

"He was stringin' you," said one of the detectives at last.

"Or else he had a jag," said another.

"Dope, more likely," suggested the third. "Look here, Hennessey, don't you ever git us up here again with no such cock-and-bull story. Come on, boys."

They left Hennessey rubbing his head helplessly and staring at the houses, one after another. He wasn't at all convinced that the strange youth had been "stringing" him—his excitement had too evidently been sincere; but if he was on the square why had he run away?

Hennessey swore finally, and returned to his post at the corner.

And it was at about that time that the phone at the German consulate rang, and a pleasant voice advised that a physician be sent at once to the house just off Ninth Avenue, as his services were badly needed there.

CHAPTER XXX.

COUNCIL OF WAR.

When Paris opened her eyes on the morning of Thursday, the twelfth of October, it was to rejoice at one of those soft and beautiful days of autumn which make of every house a dungeon to be escaped at the first possible moment. Even as early as nine o'clock, a perceptible tide had set in toward the Bois de Boulogne, or, rather, innumerable little tides, which converged at the Place de la Concorde, and rolled on along the Champs Elysées in one mighty torrent.

Against this torrent, a sturdy and energetic figure fought its way across the square; a figure carefully arrayed in black morning coat and gray trousers, and looking alertly about with a pair of very bright eyes magnified by heavy glasses. The haughtiest of the carriage crowd felt honored by his bow, for it was none other than that great diplomat, Théophile Delcassé, minister of marine.

Monsieur Delcassé was not in the habit of being abroad so early; it was a full hour before his usual time; but he had an appointment to keep which he regarded as most important, so he strode rapidly across the square, entered the handsome building to the north of it, and mounted to the first floor, where, on the corner overlooking the square on one side and the Rue Royale on the other, he had his office.

Early as it was, he found awaiting him the man whom he wished to see—a thin wisp of a man, with straggling white beard and a shock of white hair and a face no wider than one's hand, but lighted by the keenest eyes in the

world—in a word, Louis Jean Baptiste Lépine, prefect of police, to whom full justice has not been done in this story—nor in any other. Monsieur Lépine had not found the hour early; to him all hours were the same, for he was a man who slept only when he found the time, which was often not at all.

"Good morning, my dear prefect," said Delcassé, drawing off his gloves. "I trust I have not kept you waiting?"

"I but just arrived," Lépine assured him; "and I know of no better place to pass one's idle moments than at this window of yours."

Beyond it stretched the great square, with its obelisk and circle of statues, its pavilions and balustrades; beautiful now, and peaceful, but peopled with ghastly memories—for it was here the Revolution set up its guillotine, and it was here that some four thousand men and women, high and low, looked their last upon this earth, mounted the scaffold, and passed under the knife. Surely, if any spot on earth be haunted, it is this!

Something of this, perhaps, was in the minds of these two men, as they stood for a moment looking down into the square, for their faces were very thoughtful; then Delcassé's eyes traveled from one to another of the heroic figures representing the great towns of France—Lyons, Marseilles, Brest, Rouen, Bordeaux, Nantes, Lille—and came to rest upon the last one, Strasbourg, hung with black and piled with mourning garlands, in memory of the lost Alsace. Every morning, before he turned to the day's work, Monsieur Delcassé, standing at this window, gazed at that statue, while he registered anew the vow that those garlands should one day be replaced by wreaths of victory! That vow was his orison.

His lips moved silently as he made it now, then he turned to his desk.

"Be seated, my dear Lépine," he said. "I have much to discuss with you, as you may guess. First about *La Liberté*. My board of inquiry will be ready to report by Saturday. It has decided that the explosion was caused by the spontaneous combustion of the

'B' powder, as was the case with the *Jena*."

"That theory will do as well as any other," said Lépine curtly. "But you and I know that it is not the true one."

Delcassé looked at him quickly.

"Have you any news?" he asked.

"None," answered Lépine, with a frown. "The man we sought has vanished as completely as though the earth had swallowed him. I have found no trace of him since he left the office of the Messrs. Cook, with two passages for America in his pocket. I cannot understand it."

"Have the tickets been returned?"

"They have not been returned, and the Messrs. Cook, making inquiry at my suggestion, have a report from the steamship company that they have not been used."

Delcassé turned this over in his mind.

"Perhaps the man and his daughter have met with some accident."

"We should have heard of it," Lépine objected. "I have scrutinized every report—viewed everybody which at all resembled him."

"Then," said Delcassé, "he has been suppressed, as one who knew too much."

"My own opinion is," said the prefect, "that he has sought refuge in Germany, until he can prepare for another demonstration against France."

The minister moved uneasily in his chair.

"I have thought of that," he said, "and I am doing everything I can to render such an attempt impossible. But it is a hard task—one can never be sure. There is another thing I wished to ask you. Where is Crochard?"

"I do not know, sir. I have not seen him since that morning at Toulon, when we parted outside the Hotel du Nord."

"Then he, too, has disappeared?"

"Yes, sir; completely."

"Has it never occurred to you, Lépine, to connect these two disappearances?"

"Yes, I did connect them. You will remember in the note he left for me he stated that he hoped soon to have some

good news for us. But when more than two weeks elapse and we hear nothing, I am forced to conclude that he, too, has been baffled."

"Yes, it was for me a hope, also—almost my only one," said Delcassé. "I did not believe that he could fail. And if he has failed, do you know what it means for France, Lépine? It means destruction. Oh, I have spent sleepless nights, I have racked my brain! Germany's attitude is that of a nation which desires war and which is ready to provoke it. You know, of course, how strained the situation is?"

"About Morocco?"

"Yes. It has come to this: France and Germany are like two duelists, face to face, sword in hand. Either they must fight, or one must retreat—and with dishonor!"

"France cannot retreat," murmured Lépine.

"I have said the same thing a hundred times; and yet, at the bottom of my heart, I know that we cannot fight—not while this cloud of uncertainty hangs over us. To fight, with this power in the hands of Germany, would mean more than defeat—it would mean annihilation. There would be other statues to be draped with black."

Delcassé's face was livid; he removed his glasses, and polished them with a shaking hand, and, for the first time, Lépine saw his bloodshot eyes. Delcassé noticed his glance, and laughed grimly.

"Only to you, Lépine, do I dare show them," he said. "Before others I must crush this fear in my heart, bite it back from my lips; I must appear unconcerned, confident of the issue. Only to you may I speak freely. That is one reason I called you here. I felt that I must speak with some one. Lépine, I foresee for France a great humiliation."

Lépine looked at his companion with real concern.

"You exaggerate," he said. "You have been brooding over it too long."

Delcassé shook his head.

"I do not exaggerate. This thing is so terrible that it cannot be exaggerated. Even at this moment, Germany

is preparing the blow. For the past week she has been extraordinarily active. Her fleets have coaled hurriedly and put out to sea—for maneuvers, it is said; but this is not the season for maneuvers. Her shipyards have been cleared of all civilians, and a cordon of troops posted about each one. The garrison of every fortress along the frontier has been at least doubled, and the most rigid patrol established. The police regulations are being enforced with the greatest severity. Every city of the frontier swarms with spies; even here in Paris we are not safe from them—my desk was rifled two nights ago. I live in dread that any day, any hour, may bring the news of some fresh disaster!"

"And do our men learn nothing?"

"Nothing! Nothing! All they can tell me is that something is preparing, some blow, some surprise. Whatever the secret, it is well kept; so well that it can be known only to the emperor and one or two of his ministers. We have tried every means, we have exhausted every resource, all in vain. We know, in part, what is being done; of the purpose back of it we know nothing. But we can guess—the purpose is war; it can be nothing else!"

Lépine sat silent, and contemplated the rugged face opposite him—the face which told by its lined forehead, its worried eyes, its savage mouth, of the struggles, rebuffs, and disappointments of thirty years. Always, out of disaster, this man had risen unconquered. Upon his shoulders now was placed the whole of this terrific burden. He alone, of the whole cabinet, was fit to bear it; beside him the others were mere pygmies—Premier Caillaux, an amiable financier; Foreign Minister de Selves, a charming amateur of the fine arts; War Minister Messimy, an obscure army officer with a love for uniforms; Minister of Commerce Couyba, a minor poet, tainted with decadence—above all these Delcassé loomed as a Gulliver among Lilliputians. But greatness has its penalties. While the minister of foreign affairs spent his days in collecting plaques, and the minister of war his

in strutting about the boulevards, and the minister of commerce his in composing verses, Delcassé labored to save his country—labored as a colossus labors, sweating, panting, throwing every fiber of his being into the struggle—which was all the more trying, all the more terrific, because he felt that it must go against him.

"What would you suggest, Lépine?" Delcassé asked at last. "Is there any source of information which you can try?"

Lépine shook his head doubtfully.

"It is not a question of expense," Delcassé went on rapidly. "A million francs would not be too much to pay for definite information. We have spent that already! We have had the crown prince babbling in his cups; we have had I know not how many admirals and generals and diplomats confiding in their suddenly complaisant mistresses; we have searched their hearts, shaken them inside out—but they know nothing. Such and such orders have been issued; they obey the orders, but they do not know their purpose. They all talk war, shout war—Germany seems mad for war—and the government encourages them. Their inspired journals assert over and over that Germany cannot recede—that its position is final—that hereafter it must be paramount in Morocco. And to-day—or to-morrow at the latest—France must send her ultimatum."

"What will it be?"

"God knows!" and Delcassé tugged at his ragged mustache. "If it were not for one thing, Lépine, I would not hesitate, I would not fear war. France is ready, and England is at least sympathetic. But there is *La Liberté*. What if Germany can treat our other battleships as she treated that one? Yes, and England's, too! And if our battleships, why not our forts, our arsenals? Lépine," and Delcassé's lips were twitching, "I say to you frankly that, for the first time in my life, I have fear!" He fell a moment silent, twitching nervously at a paper knife he had snatched up from his desk. "What would you suggest?" he asked again.

And again Lépine shook his head.

"What can I suggest?" he protested.
"Where you have failed, what is there I can do?"

The knife snapped in Delcassé's fingers, and he hurled the fragments to the floor.

"There is one thing you can do," he said. "Find Crochard and bring him to me."

Lépine arose instantly.

"I will do my best," he said, reaching for his hat. "If he is in France, rest assured—"

There was a tap at the door, and it opened softly.

"I am not to be disturbed!" snapped the minister, and then he stopped, staring.

For there appeared on the threshold the immaculate figure, the charming and yet impressive countenance, for a sight of which the great minister had been longing; and then his heart leaped suffocatingly, for with the first figure was a second—a man with white hair and flashing eyes and thin, eager face.

As Delcassé sprang to his feet, Crochard stepped forward.

"Monsieur Delcassé," he said, "it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you a gentleman whom I know you will be most glad to meet—Ignace Vard."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ALLIANCE ENDS.

Delcassé's nostrils were distended and his eyes were glowing like those of a war horse scenting battle as he invited his visitors to be seated. Only his iron self-control, tested on I know not how many hard-fought fields of diplomacy, enabled him to speak coherent-ly; never had it been strained as at that moment.

He sat down at his desk, and glanced smilingly from one face to the other.

"I am indeed glad to meet Monsieur Vard," he said, with a calmness that was no less than a triumph; "and to see you again, Monsieur Crochard. I had but this moment charged Monsieur Lépine to bring you to me."

"Is it so serious as that?" asked Crochard, with a little smile.

"The situation could not well be more serious."

"You refer, I suppose, to the Moroccan situation?"

"Yes. France must fight, or yield to Germany."

Again Crochard smiled.

"No, no," he protested. "It is Germany which will yield!"

Delcassé bounded in his chair, as his eyes caught the glance which Crochard bent upon him.

"I knew it," he said, his face white as marble. "I guessed it—and yet I scarcely dared believe it. But the moment you entered, bringing Monsieur Vard—"

"Monsieur Vard is a very great inventor," said Crochard. "He offered his services to Germany, and she betrayed him; he now offers his services to France."

Delcassé glanced at the little man who sat there so still, so fragile, with eyes which gleamed so fiercely and lips that trembled with emotion; and he shivered a little at the thought that here was the man who had struck a terrible blow at France.

"I can see what you are thinking," Vard burst out. "You will pardon me if I speak English? I am more familiar with it than with French. I see what you are thinking. You are thinking: 'Here is the miscreant, the scoundrel, who destroyed our battleship!' Well, it is true. I am a scoundrel—or I should be one if I permitted that deed to go unrevenged. I was betrayed, sir, as this gentleman has said. I offered to the German emperor the leadership among nations; but, instead of leading, he wished to conquer them; and when I refused to be his tool, to aid his ambitions, he caused me to be imprisoned. I know not to what extremities he was ready to proceed, but this gentleman rescued me and brought me here, in order that I might lay before you the same proposal which I made to him."

Delcassé had listened closely, but he was plainly confused and astonished.

"Before going further," he suggested,

"I should very much like to hear Monsieur Crochard's story. There is much about this extraordinary affair which I do not understand—and I desire to understand everything. Will you not begin at the beginning, my friend?"

"It was very simple," said Crochard, and told briefly of the pursuit, of the encounters on the *Ottolie*, and of the final struggle in New York. "After our escape," he concluded, "we hastened to Monsieur Vard's residence, where, as I anticipated, his daughter and that admirable Monsieur Webster, whom she loves, soon joined us. It was a most happy reunion, and in the end Monsieur Webster forgave me for the theft of the little box. Of our plans we said nothing, except that Monsieur Vard was journeying back with me to Paris, and we were aboard the *Lusitania* when she sailed next morning. We arrived at Liverpool last night, and here we are!"

Lépine's face was shining with a great enthusiasm.

"Permit me to congratulate you, sir," he said. "It was finely done. I realize that the more deeply because I myself was completely baffled; and yet it should have occurred to me that the captain of the *Ottolie* might wish to deceive me. My theory was, however, that the tickets had been purchased to throw me off the scent. Monsieur Vard had, of course, as I supposed, sought refuge in Germany. Even yet I do not understand why he should have gone to America."

The remark was, in a way, addressed to the inventor, but he had fallen into thought, and paid no heed to it.

"He is often like that," said Crochard, in rapid French. "I suspect that something is wrong here," and he touched his forehead. "The trip to America was, as I understand it, a matter of sentiment with him. He insisted that this great treaty, which was to bring about world-wide peace and the brotherhood of man, should be signed on American soil."

"He is really in earnest about that treaty?" asked Delcassé. "He is not a mercenary?"

"Mercenary? Far from it, sir. Why, Monsieur Delcassé, the kaiser asked him to choose his own reward, and he refused. He is utterly in earnest—he asks nothing for himself. And I believe his idea practicable. I hope that you will consider it carefully, sir. The emperor refused because of his conditions. One was the reconstruction of Poland—he is himself a Pole. The other was the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France. Pachmann did at last agree to give up Poland—and to make him king of it, if he chose. But the other condition was too much for him. Besides, he thought the game was in his hands—he saw his emperor ruler of the world. Permit me to outline the plan of this remarkable man."

And clearly but briefly Crochard laid before the astonished minister the plan for world-wide disarmament, for universal peace, for the freeing of subject peoples, for the restoration of conquered territory, and for the gradual establishment of representative government, to the exclusion of all hereditary rulers, great and small.

"And I see no reason," Crochard concluded, "why France should hesitate to give herself whole-heartedly to this plan. With all of these things she is in sympathy; 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' has been her watchword for over a hundred years. Once we regain Alsace-Lorraine we can be well content to lay down our arms. I believe that we can secure the support of the United States and perhaps of England. To the United States a project so idealistic would be certain to appeal; and as for England, she is terrified at heart, she fears the future, she staggers under the burden of her great armaments—which yet are not great enough. Yes, we could win England!"

Delcassé had listened with gleaming eyes, all the dreamer within him afire at the splendid vision which Crochard's words evoked.

"You are right!" he cried, and sprang to his feet and approached the inventor, his hands outstretched. "Monsieur Vard," he said, "on behalf of France, I accept your proposal."

Vard was on his feet also, and his whole frame was shaking.

"You are sincere?" he stammered, peering into Delcassé's eyes. "You are in earnest? You are not deceiving me?"

"No!" said Delcassé solemnly. "I am not deceiving you. I swear it, on my honor. France will be proud to take her place at the head of this great movement." And then he stopped, and a shadow flitted across his face. "There is but one condition," he added. "You must prove to us that this power really exists."

"I agree to that!" cried Vard eagerly. "I agree to that—yes, yes, I even wish it. Any proof, any test—it shall be yours to choose. And remember—the kaiser was not merciful."

"I shall remember!" said Delcassé hoarsely, his face quivering; and he caught himself away and stood for a moment at the window, struggling for self-control. Through the square below all Paris poured, on its way to drive in the Bois, careless, happy, all unconscious of the crisis in its country's history which the moment marked. And then, by habit, Delcassé's eyes wandered to that great statue by Pradier, with the pile of mourning wreaths before it.

"I have chosen!" he said, in a choked voice. "The test shall be made at Strasbourg!"

The inventor bowed.

"If I may retire," he said, "I will begin my preparations at once. I shall need to work for a day, or perhaps two days, in some well-equipped wireless laboratory. All other arrangements I shall leave to you. It will be necessary to secure two stations in sight of the arsenal, and within five miles of it, where we can work without fear of being disturbed."

"I will attend to all that," agreed Delcassé, and touched a bell. "If General Marbeau is in his office," he added to his secretary, "please say that I wish to see him at once."

The door had closed behind the French chief of wireless and the white-

haired enthusiast, and for a moment the three men who were left behind gazed at each other in silence.

"Do you believe in this power?" asked Delcassé at last.

"There was *La Liberté*," Crochard reminded him.

"True," and the minister fell silent again.

"To attack the fort at Strasbourg will not be easy," said Crochard at last. "The Germans are no doubt already on their guard."

Delcassé smote his forehead with his open palm.

"That is it!" he cried. "Lépine, that is the explanation! It is not for war they prepare; it is in terror they withdraw their fleets into mid-ocean and throw cordons of soldiers about their forts! At this moment, in spite of their bold front, the emperor and his ministers are trembling. For of course they know that Pachmann failed—and that we succeeded."

"Undoubtedly," Crochard agreed. "Pachmann would notify the emperor of his failure as soon as he regained consciousness!"

"Not a pleasant task," chuckled Delcassé. "He has my pity. What occurred to the prince?"

"The prince was released next morning."

"You have friends, then, in New York?" asked Lépine curiously.

"I have friends everywhere," answered Crochard quietly.

"When I think of the kaiser trembling!" cried Delcassé. "Ah, what anguish must be his! I have tasted it, and I know!"

Crochard took from his coat a long pocketbook.

"This belonged to Admiral Pachmann," he said. "I paused long enough to secure it, because it contained a document which I was most anxious to possess. It will interest you, sir," and he drew out a folded paper and passed it to Delcassé.

The latter opened it, read it, reread it, and then stared at Crochard, stupefied.

"That is what one might call an im-

perial power of attorney," said Crochard, with a little laugh. "It is sufficiently comprehensive, is it not?"

"It is unbelievable!" cried Delcassé, and handed the paper to Lépine. "And this was really given by the emperor to Pachmann?"

"There is no doubt of it."

Delcassé's eyes were glowing with an infernal joy.

"And you permit me to retain this paper?" he asked.

"Certainly. Use it as you think best for France."

Delcassé was out of his chair, striding up and down the room.

"So the wheel has turned!" he cried. "You may not remember it, Monsieur Crochard—to you it may have seemed a small thing—but six years ago the emperor caused me to be driven from the foreign office because I did and said certain things which displeased him. Such was his power even here in Paris! You will scarcely believe it, but so it was. And now it is my turn. With this in my hand, all things are possible! He must have been mad to put his hand to such a paper—but, after all, it does not astonish me. He is always doing mad things; he has no balance, no self-control. But the game is in our hands; our ultimatum I will prepare to-day, and I will invite to my office the German ambassador, and I will hand him that ultimatum, and I will say certain things to him which have long been biting at my throat for utterance, and then I will give him a glimpse of this document, and finally I will send him away. Ah, there will be consternation at Berlin to-night!" Suddenly Delcassé stopped in front of Crochard's chair. "My friend," he said, in another tone, "you have saved France. You must name your own reward. I grant it before you ask it."

"Well, yes," said Crochard, smiling, "I shall not refuse. At Toulon, on the quay opposite the spot where lies the wreck of *La Liberté*, a friend of mine conducts a café. It was he who noticed the two Germans—it was he who gave me my first clew. So he deserves a reward on his own account. He is an

honest man, who has suffered unjustly. Four years ago he was condemned to prison for killing the betrayer of his daughter. He is called Samson. Monsieur Lépine will no doubt recall the circumstances."

"I recall them very well," said Lépine. "Samson escaped the day after he was sentenced. I could find no trace of him until I saw him at Toulon."

"But you did not arrest him!" said Crochard quickly.

"I promised to take no action until you and I had talked together."

"Thank you, Monsieur Lépine," said Crochard warmly. "I have always respected you as a man of your word. It was I who assisted Samson to escape, since his punishment seemed to me undeserved; it was I who secured false papers for him, and established him at Toulon. He has done well, but he dare not have his family with him. He loves his family, and without them he finds life sad. Monsieur Delcassé, you have told me to name a reward—I ask that Samson may be pardoned."

"It is granted," said Delcassé, in a low voice. "But is there nothing else? Is there nothing I can do for you, my friend?"

Crochard had arisen, and he and the great minister stood face to face.

"Yes, there is something, sir," he said, "which you can do for me, and which will make me very proud. You are a great man, and I admire you. There are not many men to whom I raise my hat; but I salute you, sir, and I hope you will accept my hand."

Delcassé's hand shot out and seized Crochard's and held it close.

"It is I who am honored!" he said thickly.

But at the end of a moment Crochard drew his hand away.

"Do not idealize me, sir," he said. "I am outside the law; you and I go different ways. If for once Monsieur Lépine and I have worked together, it was because France demanded it. We admire each other; we have found that we possess certain qualities in common. But now I have done my part; the rest is in your hands. So I say adieu; our

alliance is over; and now we are enemies again—”

“Not enemies,” broke in Delcassé quickly. “Antagonists, perhaps; but not enemies. I wish—”

“No, do not wish,” said Crochard. “My life satisfies me. I have a certain work to do, and I am happy in doing it. But I accept your word—henceforth we are antagonists, not enemies. Adieu, sir.”

The door closed, and Delcassé, dropping heavily into his chair, gazed mutely into Lépine’s inscrutable eyes.

CHAPTER XXXII.

STRASBOURG.

A mile or two back from the Rhine, on the banks of the Ill, stands the fair city of Strasbourg. Once she was proud as well as fair; but her pride has been trailed in the dust. For four centuries a free city, defending herself virginlike against all comers, for two centuries more the happy capital of the loveliest of French provinces, she has borne for forty years the chain of the conqueror and bowed her head beneath the lash. But she is French still—French to the very core of her; and though her hands are bound her soul is free.

The oldest part of the town has changed but little with the centuries. There are the narrow, crooked streets, the tall, half-timbered houses with their many-dormered roofs, and there is the gray Minster, which has looked down on the city through all her fortunes. To the north lie the newer quarters of the town, spick and span, Germanly unimaginative, and to the south are great arsenals and barracks, guarded by a mighty fortification.

For Strasbourg is now one of the great strongholds of the German empire. Haunted by the fear that France may one day come pouring up from the south to regain her lost city, the engineers of the kaiser have labored with their every talent for her defense. A circle of fourteen forts girdles her round, and within them rampart fol-

lows rampart, culminating in the mighty citadel.

What hope can an army, however great, have of capturing such a place? In the mind of every German engineer there is but one adjective, and always one, associated with it—impregnable.

And yet, in this mid-month of October, there was in the air a feeling of uneasiness, impalpable, not to be defined or even spoken of—but present, ever-present. From far-distant posts of the empire, troops had been hurried southward, until the usual garrison of fifteen thousand men had been more than doubled. Every rampart was manned, every wall had its sentry, and through the streets patrols moved constantly, their gaze directed at the housetops. Their orders were to see that no one stretched a wire to any building; to arrest any one found doing so, and send him at once to Berlin, under guard.

The restaurants, the hotels, the cafés—every place where crowds assembled—swarmed with strangers, speaking French, it is true, but with an accent which, to acute ears, betrayed their origin and made one wonder at their pro-Gallic sentiments. The French and German residents of the town drew imperceptibly apart, grew a little more formal, ceased the exchange of friendly visits. No one knew what was about to happen, but every one felt that a crisis of some sort was at hand.

The commandant changed, in those days, from a bluff, self-confident, and brave soldier to a shrunken craven, trembling at shadows. If he had known where the danger lay, or what it was, he would have met it valiantly enough; but he knew scarcely more than did his humblest soldier. He knew that the peril was very great; he knew that at any moment his magazines might blow up beneath his feet; he knew that what he had to guard against was the stringing of wires, the establishment of a wireless plant. Every stranger must be watched, his registration investigated, his baggage at all times kept under surveillance. A stranger carrying a bundle in the streets must always be followed. Every resident receiving a

roomer, a boarder, or even a guest from another city must make immediate return to the police.

How many times had the commandant read these instructions! And always, at the last, he read twice over the paragraph at the bottom of the sheet, underlined in red:

At all hours of the day or night, two operators will be on duty at every wireless station, their receivers at their ears, their instruments adjusted. Should they perceive any signal which they are unable to explain, especially a series of measured dashes, they will report the same immediately to the commandant, who will turn out his entire command and cause a thorough search to be made at once of all housetops, hills, and eminences of every sort within a radius of five miles. All wires whose use is not fully apparent will be torn down, and all persons having access to such wires will be arrested and held for interrogation. *Should the series of signals begin a second time, all magazines will at once be flooded.*

This last sentence, printed in capitals to give it emphasis, the commandant at Strasbourg could not understand. To flood the magazines meant the loss of a million marks; besides, why should it be necessary? What possible danger could threaten those great ammunition storehouses, buried deep beneath walls of granite, protected from every conceivable mishap, and whose keys hung always above his desk? He was completely baffled; worse than that, he felt himself shaken and unnerved in face of this mysterious peril.

A copy of this order was sent to every fortress in Germany, and it is therefore not remarkable that, three days after it was issued, it should be in the hands of Monsieur Delcassé. He read it with a lively pleasure. He was beginning to enjoy life again. He knew that the tone of his ultimatum had astonished the German ambassador; but he also knew that, while the German press still talked of the national honor and of Germany's duty to Morocco, the inner circle about the emperor was distinctly ill at ease. The emperor himself had been invisible for some days, and was reported to be suffering with a

severe cold. After reading the order, Delcassé summoned Marbeau.

"How do your plans shape themselves?" he asked.

"Admirably, sir," answered the wireless chief. "We shall be ready to start to-morrow."

"When is the test to take place?"

"If everything goes well, one week from yesterday, at noon."

"You must use great care. The Germans are on their guard. Here is something that will interest you."

Marbeau took the order and read it carefully.

"If the magazines are flooded," Delcassé pointed out, "we can do nothing."

"It will be something to have occasioned the destruction of so much ammunition," Marbeau rejoined; "but we are not taking that chance. All our instruments will be tuned and tested before we start. The Germans will hear those wireless signals but once."

A little tremor passed across Delcassé's face.

"You believe in this invention?" he asked. "You have investigated it?"

Marbeau shrugged his shoulders.

"I know nothing more of it than you do, sir. Monsieur Vard tells me nothing, shows me nothing, persists in working alone. He is most jealous of it. But yes—I believe; when I remember the twenty-fifth of September, I cannot but believe!"

Delcassé was pacing to and fro, his hands behind him.

"Sometimes I doubt, Marbeau," he said. "Sometimes I doubt. The destruction of *La Liberté* may have been one of those strange coincidences which sometimes happen. And sometimes I hesitate; sometimes I draw back before the idea of this demonstration. For Morocco we no longer need it; I have in my possession a paper which will win that battle for us. But then, when I falter, the thought of France's future nerves me. So I stand aside and let the test proceed. But I warn you again, Marbeau, to be most careful. Do not neglect to provide a way of escape. Failure this time is of little consequence—we can always try again; but under

no circumstances must this machine fall into the hands of Germany; and for you and for Vard it must be death before capture. He must not be taken alive."

"I understand, sir," said Marbeau quietly.

"If you think Strasbourg too difficult, it is not too late to draw back. It was, perhaps, unwise for me to select it."

"The more difficult it is, the more will it dismay the enemy," Marbeau pointed out. "Let us try Strasbourg, at least. If we fail there, we can try again somewhere else."

"Well, I agree. Remember, you are not to spare expense."

"We have had to purchase two houses in order to be quite secure."

"Purchase a dozen, if you need them. The date, you say—"

"Is one week from yesterday."

"And the hour?"

"The hour of noon."

Delcassé turned to the day on his desk calendar, and wrote a large "12" upon it.

"Adieu, then, Marbeau," he said, and held out his hand. "My prayers go with you."

Fronting on the Zuricherstrasse, some half mile from the arsenal at Strasbourg, stands a great tobacco manufactory, covering two blocks, and employing a thousand people. These men and women and children live for the most part in the crooked little streets of the neighborhood, for the hours of work are long, and to walk back and forth from a distance not to be thought of. When a family has managed to scrape together a little capital, more often than not the head of it opens a tiny shop, while the younger members keep on working at the factory until the business had established itself. Then the family takes a step upward in social grade.

In a little room back of such a shop in the Hennenstrasse, on the morning of a day late in October, three men sat down to breakfast. It was a silent meal, for each of the three was preoccupied. They were roughly dressed in

the blouses and coarse trousers of laborers, and their faces were covered with a two weeks' stubble of beard. One was white-haired, old, and seemingly very feeble; but the other two were in the prime of life. At last the meal was finished, and the two younger men pushed back their chairs and looked at each other; then they looked at their companion, who, with vacant eyes, was staring at the opposite wall so intently that the other two involuntarily glanced around at it.

"It is time for you to go, lieutenant," said one of the men, in a low voice. "Tell me again what you have to do, so that I may be sure there is no mistake."

"What I have to do is this, general," said the other. "From here, I go to the house we know of, taking a circuitous route, loitering on the way, and making certain that I am not followed. If I find myself followed, I will pass this shop, dropping my handkerchief in front of it, and then turning back to pick it up. If I am not followed, I enter the other house, mount to the roof, and make sure that everything is in order. At ten minutes to twelve I hoist into place the two arms to which our wives are secured, stretching them tight by means of the winch which we have provided, and then I at once start the clockwork. I then descend, make my way to the tram station, take a third-class ticket to Colmar, where I will await you at Valentin's cabaret. If you do not arrive by sundown, I aim to go on to Paris to make my report."

"That is right. You have your passport?"

"Yes."

"Let me see your watch."

They compared watches, and found that they both showed twenty minutes past ten.

"Adieu, then," said the elder man; "and let there be no failure."

"Trust me, general," and the lieutenant saluted and went out through the shop.

"And now, Monsieur Vard," said Marbeau, in a low tone, "the hour has come."

The old man nodded, and together

they left the room. Marbeau stopped to secure the door, then followed Vard up to the first landing, where there was another heavy door, which the Frenchman also bolted; so with the next landing and the next. He smiled grimly as he thought of Monsieur Delcasse's warning to leave open a road of escape! He had, indeed, provided such a road, but he carried it in his pocket.

At last they stood in a tiny room under the ridge of the roof. It was lighted by a single dormer, and, looking out through this, one could see over the housetops, half a mile away, the grim wall of the arsenal. Before the dormer stood a table, to which was bolted a metal framework, supporting the box, with its sides of glass half covered with tinfoil. It was mounted on a pivot, and from it two heavy wires ran to a key such as telegraphers use, and then down to a series of powerful batteries standing on the floor.

"You are sure it is all right?" asked Marbeau, almost in a whisper.

For answer Vard closed a switch, opened the key, and then depressed it slowly. There was a crackle of electricity, and a low humming like that of a giant top.

"No, no!" gasped Marbeau, and snatched the switch open.

The inventor smiled.

"There is no danger," he said, "until the other current is turned on."

Marbeau's face was livid, and beaded with perspiration. He wiped it with a shaking hand.

"Nevertheless, you startled me," he said. "The sound the machine makes has a frightful menace in it!" Then he looked at his watch. "It is now eleven."

Vard nodded, and bent again above his apparatus, touching it here and there with the touch of a lover—tightening a wire, examining a contact, testing the vibrator.

His usually pale face was flaming with excitement, and his eyes shone with a strange fire.

Marbeau glanced at him uneasily, then stared out at the gray wall of the arsenal. Upon its summit a sentry walked to and fro with the precision of

a machine. High above him flapped the imperial flag of Germany, displaying its eagles and complacent motto. Marbeau, like every Frenchman, considered that flag an insult, for the lower arm of its cross bore the date "1870," and he stared out at it now, dreaming of the future, dreaming of the day when France should tear it down.

Vard touched him on the arm.

"I should like to see the plan of the fort again," he said.

Marbeau opened his shirt, and from a little oilskin bag produced a square of tracing paper. He unfolded it, and handed it to the inventor.

"This is the side toward us," he said. "There are the magazines, the main one being here in the center."

With a nod of understanding, Vard carried the drawing to the window, and compared it carefully with the stretch of wall, swinging his pivoted machine from side to side to be sure that its range was ample. Then he refolded the map and returned it to Marbeau.

"It must be almost the hour," he said.

With a start, Marbeau pulled out his watch. It showed fifteen minutes to twelve. Then, watch in hand, he stood gazing out at the bastion. Four minutes passed, five, six, seven—

Suddenly from the fort came the deep boom of an alarm gun. A minute later a file of men appeared upon the summit of the bastion; a gate, away to the right, swung open, and an armed battalion marched out at the double-quick.

"The signal!" gasped Marbeau. "It is the signal! Their wireless men have picked it up!"

Again the alarm gun boomed sullenly, and they could hear the faint, shrill calling of a bugle. Then came the distant thunder of the answering guns from the forts about the town; from the streets rose excited voices, the clatter of running feet.

One minute—two—three—

"Now!" said Marbeau, snapped shut his watch, and thrust it into his pocket.

Vard, his face twitching, closed the switch, and touched the key. Again came the sharp crackle of flame, the

deep hum of the vibrator. Marbeau, the marrow frozen in his bones, but with the sweat pouring from his face, stared out—and then, close beside him, came a white burst of flame—the horrible odor of burning flesh—

He jerked around to see Vard fallen forward above the table, while about his hands played those livid tongues of fire.

Half an hour before midnight of that day, a man, roughly dressed, with a stubble of beard masking his face, appeared at the ministry of marine, was passed at once by the guard at the entrance, and made his way quickly to the office of Monsieur Delcassé. He tapped at the door, which was instantly opened by the minister himself.

"Ah, Marbeau," he said quietly. "Come in. We have failed, then?"

"Yes, we have failed!" groaned Marbeau, and sank into a chair.

Delcassé touched him gently on the shoulder.

"Do not take it so much to heart," he said. "There was something wrong, perhaps. We can try again—"

"No, we cannot try again," and Marbeau's face was piteous.

"Vard is not captured?"

"No; he is dead."

"But his instrument—his invention?"

"Is destroyed, fused, burned to a mere mass of metal," and Marbeau told the story of that last moment.

"But what happened? What occurred?" asked the minister dazedly.

"I do not know—I was staring at the fort. He may have had a seizure and fallen across his instrument, or he may have broken the circuit in some way—displaced a wire, perhaps—and received the full shock himself. It was over in an instant. He was dead when I dragged him away."

For some time Delcassé walked thoughtfully up and down.

"You could not, by any possibility, reconstruct it?" he asked at last.

"I fear not, sir; he told me nothing.

I do not even know the principle involved."

Again Delcassé paced back and forth. Then he sat down before his desk, with a gesture of acquiescence.

"So that dream is ended," he said. "It was too great, no doubt, to be accomplished. God willed otherwise. But at least we are richer than we were. From time to time we will terrify these Germans with a little blast of wireless. That will be amusing, and it may cost them some ammunition. And in the struggle over Morocco France wins! That is assured! Good night, general. You need rest."

All the world knows now, of course, that France did win. On November fourth the question of her supremacy in Morocco was settled once for all by the treaty signed at Berlin. When Europe learned the terms of that treaty, it was shaken with amazement. For Germany had receded, after swearing that she would never recede; had guaranteed to France a free hand in Morocco, with the right to establish a protectorate if she thought proper—and in exchange for all this received a small strip of the French Congo. Yes, there was one other thing she received of which the treaty made no mention. When Herr von Kiderlen-Waechter had affixed his signature, Ambassador Cambon, who acted for France, gave him silently a sealed envelope. He ripped it open, glanced at the signature of the paper it contained, and placed it carefully in his pocket. An hour afterward, he handed it to his emperor.

And two days later, Admiral Heinrich Pachmann, returning from an audience with the emperor, went quietly to his quarters. At the usual hour his aid, coming for orders, rapped at his door. There was no answer, and, opening the door, the aid glanced inside. Pachmann lay sprawled across the floor, a bullet in his heart. His hand still grasped his revolver—a handsome one, which bore, chased along the barrel, the motto of his house: "I love and I obey!"

The Burnt Card

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

Author of "Shifty of the Sure Thing," Etc.

If you have ever sat in a poker game you will relish this yarn of Shifty Bill, the circus man, who held four cards of a royal flush and felt that the money in the jack pot was the same as his. But here lies the mystery: Of equal importance to the cards in his hand was the fact that his partner smoked a pipe

MITCH stared for a long time out of the little window of the stateroom; but, seeing nothing against the darkness without, at last turned his attention within. For a while he regarded Shifty Bill Thomas, lounging, half doubled up in the chair opposite, and rolled a cigarette. Conversation had lagged between the two cronies of the Great Consolidated One-ring Shows. It had been lagging for days, and for the very good reason that there was only one subject to discuss, and that carried nothing but gloom. The grinding, wheezing circus train was chugging along at its twenty-mile-an-hour pace. Now and then it stopped exasperatingly. There was a breath of coldness in the air which sifted through the ventilators, coldness which told that the end of the circus season had come.

Mitch noticed it, and sniffed like a pointer on the trail of a bird; but Shifty only sank lower in his chair, and stared at the flaring bits of chromolike calendar opposite. At last he turned.

"Well," he asked, "why don't you say something?"

Mitch flicked his cigarette.

"What's the use? There ain't anything to say, anyhow, is there?"

"Well"—and Shifty's tone bore the marks of grumpiness—"you might talk about the weather, or the town we're going to, or something, instead of just sitting over there and saying nothing.

What's the name of the burg, anyhow? I haven't paid no attention. I haven't had a chance to pay no attention to nothing," he added, looking hard at the massed papers on the little table before him. "It's something about a point, ain't it?"

"Glue Point," answered Mitch slowly; and Shifty scowled.

"Glue Point. Yeh, a fine name! That's where we stick, I guess, and auction off the menagerie for a winter board bill. Mitch"—and he rose half out of his chair—"if you ever catch me in the circus business again, just send for the ambulance, that's all I've got to say. Just send for the dippy crew, and put me in the padded room. And for why? Yeh, for why!" he repeated, as though the question had been challenged. "A fine lot of good it's done me, ain't it? I start out this season with twenty thou planted in my kick. Now what've I got? One thousand two hundred and forty-two dollars and eight cents. I'll save the eight cents, and put it in a penny bank. The rest I'll kick out to-morrow, and then I guess I'll go to the poorhouse. The circus game—bah!"

"Well, all seasons don't run this way." Mitch was attempting to be consoling. "You've had hard luck, Shifty. Anybody could see that."

"With blinders on," came roaringly from across the stateroom. "Hard luck? I've been soaked in it. Every

time I start to run the grafts—what happens? I get it in the neck—bing! Just like that. Every time I get to where I can pull off a little stunt or two, and whang! some eagle-eyed guy with a star sits on my head. A fine chance! Me for farming, that's all!"

"Well, if you look at it that way, of course—"

"Aw, go on to bed!" Shifty Bill growled. "Lemme alone. I want to think, anyhow."

"But maybe to-morrow'll pull out something. You never can—"

"To-morrow pull out something?" Shifty had risen from his chair, red-faced. "How's to-morrow going to pull me out of nineteen thousand beans in the hole, that's what I want to know! Go on to bed! Hear me? You gimme the fidgets sitting over there!"

And Mitchell, finding his solace meeting only a poor welcome, retired. For a long time after he had gone, Shifty Bill Thomas, of the Great Consolidated, sat staring at the calendar. Then he rose and with a rip tore the sheet from the wall. "Get out of the way!" he exclaimed, as though the calendar had been the cause of his every wrong. "You make me color blind! Make it all up to-morrow? Yes, I will! I'll about get in there, and find eighteen other shows, a famine, a flood, a yellow-fever epidemic, and a sick cow in the town—that's about what I'll find. Make it up? Yes, I will!"

And when Shifty dropped slowly from his car in the morning there was every evidence that at least a part of his predicted misfortune was to come true. The canvasmen were already on the lot, pulling and jerking the great tents to their positions by the little red flags. A few people here and there were watching the operations. Shifty looked past them, past the smoke on the cook tent, and on toward the little town in the distance. And it showed but a feeble chance for a big day's business. A little knot of houses, a church spire or two—that was all.

"Glue Point," muttered Shifty! "Glue Point! A fine chance we've got for this burg! Fifteen cents' worth

of big-show tickets, and two glasses of red lemonade, that's all. Who booked this town? Who—" He turned and started toward a figure near the long line of cars—Gregg, the advance man. "Did I book us into this town, or was I having a fit when I did it?" he asked angrily. "Somebody hand me a bro-mide if—"

Gregg turned. "Don't you remember this burg?" he asked. "That night when we talked it over? This is a live joint. Money here."

"Money?" asked Shifty Bill, with fine sarcasm. "Where'd they keep it—in a tin bank? Money—you put me onto this town, you little shrimp!" he burst out.

"Sure I did." And Gregg grinned. "Glad of it. Wait till you see the house this afternoon."

"Where's it coming from?"

"Coming from? The mines. There's fifty coal mines within twenty miles of here, Mr. Thomas. One of the best little show towns I ever hit."

"Mines?" asked Shifty Bill, with a sudden softening of the voice. "Huh!"

"Yeh. Pay day was just last Tuesday. They're ripe even if it is late in the season. North Brothers were here in May, but that won't hurt us any. It was too far off. They're show hungry. Oh, by the way—"

And there was something in the way Gregg said it that gave Shifty Bill his premonition. His lips had started to pucker for a halfway happy little whistle, but they went into a straight line. His hands had sought their favorite position under his coat tails, but they dropped to his sides again. His head shot down in his shoulders, and he stared at the advance man.

"What's up?"

"The license. I—"

"License! Didn't you pay it? I gave you the cash. Didn't I give you twenty-five dollars to—"

"But it's over that. It's three hundred."

It had come, and the face of Shifty Bill Thomas, of the Great Consolidated, went purple.

"Three hundred!" he gasped. "Three hundred beans to show in this little

wart of a burg? Three hundred good, hard cart wheels? I won't pay it! Hear me? I won't pay it! I'll bust up this town first—where's the mayor? Have they got a mayor?" His hands were flopping spasmodically at his sides. "I'll—I'll—I'll——"

And he had started thumpingly off down the railroad tracks toward town. Shifty Bill had received the one jolt which had turned things over within him now. He was angry—angry enough to fight—and as he slammed along the flying ballast at the side of the track gave indication of his mind state. Shifty Bill had received the final straw.

"Three hundred dollars!" he almost shouted to himself. "Three hundred dollars for this peanut of a village! Three hundred—wait till I see that mayor!"

He reached the depot of the little town, and started up its one main street. He found the sign of the city hall, and banged up the steps. He skirted along the dark little hallway, and jerked open the knob of the mayor's office. Then he stopped while a bit of a blank expression came into his countenance.

"Why—hello, Dink!" he said to the man at the desk. That personage rose, looked hard a minute, then extended a hand.

"Bill Thomas," he said smilingly, "or I'm a goat! Why, say, I didn't know you were with this show."

"Didn't know you were mayor of Glue Point, either," said Shifty somewhat happily. He was beginning to see his way out. "I thought you still was in the carnival game. Say, Dink"—and he sought a chair as the thought of his wrongs' came on him again—"who slammed this three-hundred-dollar license on things? Huh? I can't pay it, that's on the square; I just can't, that's all. It's outrageous." Then he stopped to look at his old acquaintance.

Mayor Dink Harvey, of Glue Point, had seated himself at his desk, and was looking at the floor with screwed-up eyes.

"It's the council did it," he answered. "They put it on before I came in here. Maybe, Shifty"—his steady gaze at the

floor grew harder and more intense—"I can handle things. Sure I can. No sense in hanging a three-hundred-dollar license on a show. No sense in it at all. Come back at about a quarter of twelve."

And at a quarter of twelve Shifty Bill was there to meet a mayor who smiled and winked at the circus owner.

"Put it over for you, old top," he said genially. "More than that, you show for nothing."

Shifty grinned, and extended a hand.

"For nothing? The eats are on me," he said. "Where's the hotel?"

"Nothing of the kind." Dink had risen, and was reaching for his hat. "The eats are on me—out at the house. I've got a cook there that's worth a million hotels. You're not doing anything this afternoon?"

"Nope. I guess the show can get along without me." Shifty was feeling particularly at peace with the world since that three hundred dollars was wiped off the slate. "What's doing?"

"Nothing much. Just wanted to show you the mines. I've got a car, you know. Haven't done so rotten since I've been down here. And let me tell you this," he added, with a little dig in the ribs and a wink: "This town is one of the liveliest little congregations you ever stuck foot in. Guess you still play your little game of poker once in a while?"

"Well, once in a while." Shifty had not ridden in a motor car for an age. The world was growing brighter. "Why—do they play here?"

"I can scare up a game for to-night. The bunch is usually on the job. Just a gentleman's game, you know. Of course, though, if everybody goes crazy——" He extended his hands, and Shifty grinned.

"Sky limit, huh?" he asked.

"And then some. Guess we'd better be starting for that dinner." And the mayor looked at his watch.

Thus it was that Shifty Bill roamed into the dressing tent just shortly before time for the night show, and surveyed the performers there. He stood

silent a moment, then approached Muggs, the trick-mule rider.

"Where's Mitch?" he asked somewhat cautiously.

"Don't know, sir," the rider answered. "He went to town about five o'clock, and he hasn't showed yet. Did you want him for anything special?"

"No"—Shifty was half swinging on one foot, somewhat aimlessly—"nothing special. Only I wasn't going to be here to-night, and I just thought I'd let him know where I was. If he should happen to want me for anything, tell him that he can find me down at the mayor's office. But"—and Shifty guarded his message with a cupped hand—"tell him to knock three times on the door before he comes in. See? And never mind telling anybody what I've told you."

Then he disappeared, to skirt the tents, with their pink diffusions here and there where the lights from within showed their reflections against the darkness without, to plod with care-free steps across the circus grounds, and on to the railroad track. Shifty Bill was not exactly happy. But he had at least found an old friend, and an old friend to Shifty was something worth while. Besides, the afternoon show had run five hundred dollars above his expectations. The world was almost good.

An hour later Mitchell, boss clown, walked into the dressing room of the circus. His main act had gone without his clowning of it, and there showed in his demeanor no evidences of an attempt to work. In his eyes was a little gleam which spelled wonder and a mind struggling to grasp a situation not quite plain to him. There was a nervous little twitch to his lips. He turned to his assistant.

"Shifty showed yet?" he asked.

"Yes"—the assistant was talking through the daubs of clown white as he smoothed over a place knocked off by a hard fall—"he was in here about an hour ago. Guess Muggs knows where he went. Saw them talking together when he was in here."

"Where's Muggs?"

"In the ring—on the Hezekiah stunt."

Mitch grunted. "Sure he'll be in the ring just when I'm in a hurry," he said more to himself than any one else. "Funny thing about this town. They never had a three-hundred license fee before we struck here."

"Did they have one for us?" The assistant was mildly interested.

"Yeh; then cut it off. Can't figure it out. The highest license they ever had here before was ten beans. There's something up somewhere, with the Slippery Elm and Tony Jereau in town. As soon as I saw them I began tracking it. Ain't Muggs out of the ring yet?"

The assistant took a look through the flags.

"He's on the last kicks. Who's the Slippery Elm?"

"The Slippery Elm?" Mitch rose from his sitting posture, and waved his arms. "Who isn't he? If there ever was a guy that had his thumbs down on Shifty Bill Thomas, it's Slippery Elm Campbell. And that ain't all. He's got Tony Jereau with him—and Tony never did a straight thing in his life. And, more than that, Dink Harvey's mayor of this town—and Dink Harvey and Slippery drank milk out of the same pan when they were pups. There's something—where's Shifty?"

The last question had been shot at Muggs as he leaped from the trick mule at the flags and came into the dressing tent. Muggs motioned the boss clown to one side.

"He said that if you wanted him for anything you'd find him down at the mayor's office. And he said to knock three times on the door."

"Poker! A game of poker!" The excited voice of Mitch had broken in as the dawn of the whole thing had come to him. "Now are you wise to why they put up that license to three hundred, then cut it off so Shifty'd be in a good humor, huh? And Tony Jereau marking the cards for Dink!"

"I don't know anything about it," Muggs answered, with a bewildered air. "What's—"

But Mitch had gone to seek the treas-

ury car, and to burst in upon the counter of money.

"Give me a bag full of cash!" he ordered. "Quick! Shifty wants it."

"A bag full—"

"I don't care how much is in it, just so there's a bag full. And hurry up! Oh, make it pennies if you want to, just so it's money. Can't you hurry?"

The treasurer looked bewildered, but he obeyed. In the season that Mitch, as boss clown, had been the crony of Shifty Bill Thomas, he had come to be looked upon as much as an owner as he of the elusive name himself. Hurriedly the treasurer rammed gold, silver, and bills into the bag, and turned to Mitchell, busily writing something on a bit of paper.

"Know how much you've got there?" that personage asked hurriedly.

"Twelve hundred and forty. Just counted it."

"Keep track of it so things'll be straight. I'm gone."

And out of the treasury wagon he had sped, leaping over ropes and hurrying past the gangs of razorbacks and canvasmen on the grounds, skirting the crowd before the side show, and hurrying for a short cut to town.

Fifteen minutes, and he had climbed the narrow stairway to the mayor's office. He gave the knock.

"I want to see Bill Thomas," he ordered, as the door opened and he looked within. The faces of those at the chip-piled table were strange to him, with the exception of Dink Harvey and Shifty himself. Tony Jereau and the Slippery Elm were not there. Mitch had not expected them to be. They had done their work already. Shifty was rising from the table. Mitch started forward, and stopped just inside the door.

"Here's that money you sent for," said he hastily, and he gave Shifty a guarded kick as he noted the look of bewilderment in the circus owner's eyes. "Here's a little statement of the afternoon show that the treasurer sent along."

He handed Shifty the bit of paper, and waited anxiously while he read.

Shifty's eyes had trained themselves for figures, not sentences, but sentences were there just the same—sentences that read:

You're in a crooked game. I got wise. The Slippery Elm and Tony Jereau are in on this thing. Get out while the getting's good.

Shifty read, reread, then smiled.

"He's got them figures mixed," he said slowly; "that don't add up right."

He fished in his pocket for a pencil, then turned so that he might write without those at the table seeing:

You're a darned fool. It's on the square. I've been winning straight along.

He moved it out that Mitch might see, then pulled it back again. There had come the sound of a step from behind, and Dink Harvey was beside them.

"Hello, Mitch, old scout! Want to sit in?"

The hand of the mayor was outstretched.

Mitch took it, and laughed.

"Don't mind—if Shifty'll stake me when I get a straight flush."

Again the foot went out and found Shifty's shin. That person frowned a bit, for he was in a gentlemen's game. But he managed to cover the frown with a laugh, and acquiesced.

"S'long as he don't go over a thousand," he added.

"Burn the top card?" asked Mitchell, as he took his seat between Dink and Shifty.

The mayor looked at the four other men.

"I haven't been," he said. "I—"

"There wasn't any rule on it," one of the other players broke in; "just keep on doing like we've been doing. Those that want the first card discarded on the draw have called for it. I guess that's the best way to handle it."

"Guess it is," said Shifty.

"Guess it is," echoed Mitchell. "What's a stack of chips cost?"

And the game had begun anew. A half hour. The chips before Shifty Bill Thomas and before Mitchell had mounted steadily. From one to another the deal went while the luck held

fair. There came a jack pot. It held one hand—two—three—four. The deal was Dink Harvey's.

Shifty Bill Thomas picked up his cards one by one, and his eyes grew wide in spite of himself as he beheld the first four. Then there came the little flash of disappointment at the last, but still the strength lay in his hand. Staring at him were the ten, jack, queen, and king of clubs—four of the cards of a royal flush. The eight of hearts which broke the run looked like a forest fire. Shifty shuffled it to one side, and waited results. The dealing had finished.

Shifty saw Mitch shoot a little glance across the table, then look hard at his cards. Expectancy was in the circus owner's eyes. The absolute feeling of certainty in the draw that comes to the heart of a poker player once in a long while had fastened itself within his ribs. The warning of Mitchell had been forgotten. All he knew was that he held four cards of a royal flush, that there were sixteen ways for him to make a straight, a flush, a straight flush, or a royal, and that the money in the jack pot was the same as his. He slanted down in his chair.

"Course this hasn't got anything to do with my hand," he volunteered heavily, with a laugh, "but they's only one trouble to this limit proposition. A fellow can't any more bluff'n he can fly. The minute he——"

"Then we'll take off the limit." There was a note of eagerness in the voice of Dink Harvey. "Anybody care?"

"Not me," Mitch answered.

"Suits me." And it did suit Shifty Bill Thomas to perfection.

"That's good," said the miner who touched Shifty's elbow on the left.

"All right for me," came the echo of the other player, and Dink nodded his head.

"The limit's off. Anybody open the pot?"

Mitchell looked hard at his hand, and grinned.

"Seeing the limit's off," he said finally, "guess I'll just let somebody else start things. You open it, Shifty?"

"By me."

"You, Carter?"

"I'm by."

"Same here."

Then Dink Harvey, as his turn came, reached for his stack of chips. "Since we're all talking about this little limit thing, I'll just open it for five hundred dollars."

"I stay." The voice was that of Mitch, slow and steady.

Shifty already was clawing his chips to the middle of the table. "Raise you a thousand," he said sharply, "just to keep the shorts out."

"One drops out here."

"Another here."

The voices were those of the two other players. Dink Harvey smiled pleasantly.

"Trying that bluff already?" he asked, as he looked across the table into the keen eyes of Shifty Bill. "I think you are. And, seeing that's the case, I'll just hike you two thousand—seeing the limit's off."

Mitch slid low in his seat.

"I'm in five hundred dollars," he said. "I'll go a thousand more, and that's all I've got. I call for my showdown on that."

"We've got you," came from Harvey, leaning across the table. "What do you do, Shifty?"

The circus owner fidgeted in his chair. Once again he looked at his ten, jack, queen, and king of clubs. The certainty still was in his heart.

"I want to raise you."

"Well?"

"But I'm out of money when I've called that hike of yours."

"You've got a circus, haven't you?" The voice of Dink Harvey was cold, insistent.

"Sure, I've got a circus."

"Well, circuses are worth money. If you want to bet a few elephants and tigers and camels and lions and things, go on and bet them."

There was something about the tone that Shifty Bill did not like. One of two things—Dink Harvey was bluffing, or he "had 'em." It lay between the two of them, the betting, now. Mitch-

ell was out, except for his draw and his chance in the show-down. Already the money the boss clown stood to win had been pulled to one side.

A moment of hesitation, and Shifty leaned forward. Mitch was sitting low in his chair, regarding his cards and scratching match after match fruitlessly as he strove to light a pipe from which the tobacco long had departed. But Shifty did not notice. The fire of fight had come into his eyes. That sixteen ways—

"All right," he snapped; "if you want to take a chance on an elephant or two, I'll hike you a couple of thousand."

"And I'll go you two thousand better," came coolly from across the table as the greenbacks traveled to the center. "You might as well make out notes for that money as you go along."

"Notes!" Shifty Bill had lost his head now. "All right; I'll make out notes—and I'll make them out for enough to cover your two thousand and go a couple of thousand higher!"

Mitchell, boss clown, still sat low in his chair, and still scratched matches. Once or twice he threw one down angrily.

Dink Harvey, the impenetrable, smiled again. "And—going up two thousand," he said, as he shoved the money into the steadily growing pile. "Are you going to raise that?"

The last question struck Shifty Bill suddenly and queerly. Evidently there was no bluffing to Dink Harvey's playing now. He held the cards, and there began to creep into the heart of the circus owner a strange, unaccountable fear. The thought of Mitchell's message flashed across his brain. He moved uneasily in his chair, and regarded his crony, still sitting there peaceably, still lighting his matches, still apparently devoid of all interest in the fight between the men. It came in a flash to Shifty. Mitchell had attempted to warn him, and failed. Then he had determined to let things take their course. The circus owner picked up his pen, and wrote his I O U with fingers that shook somewhat.

"I'll just call that raise," he said somewhat huskily.

"Call it! That all?" The mocking voice from across the table was penetrating now. "I thought you were so anxious to have the limit taken off? Not playing the quitter, are you?"

"Quitter!" It ate into Shifty like acid. "Quitter! No! I'll raise you five thousand!" he burst forth impulsively.

"And five thousand more."

"And five thousand on top of that."

"And five thousand more."

The dizziness of anger had passed. Almost tremblingly Shifty Bill signed the sheet of paper, and threw it on the table.

"That's all I'll go," he said slowly—"until after I draw."

"Well, if that's the way you look at it—" Dink smilingly picked up the deck. "Card—how many you want, Mr. Mitchell?"

Mitchell looked up as though surprised.

"Me? Oh, I don't want any."

A slight look of wonderment crossed the face of Dink Harvey, then eased.

"Got a pat one, eh?" he said, as he threw the top card of the deck on the table—the "burning" process, as it is known to poker players—and turned to Shifty Bill. "How many—"

But there his voice was lost for a moment in the higher one of Mitchell. An arm had descended, and a match slammed upon the table.

"Dog-gone these matches," came the strident tones of the boss clown. "I've burned them and burned them and burned them trying to light this pipe, and they all go out!" A foot went out and crashed against the shin of Shifty Bill Thomas. "I never burned up so many matches in my life."

Shifty turned. There was a meaning in that kick—a meaning that the circus owner could not understand.

"What's the matter, Mitch?" he asked somewhat aimlessly.

"Nothing, only I've burned and burned and burned matches until I'm getting tired of it." The kick again. "I—"

"Well, that's got nothing to do with this card game." Dink Harvey was getting somewhat impatient.

A second of hesitation. Then something bright and shining seemed to snap into Shifty Bill's eyes as he leaned forward.

"You haven't been discarding the top card as a usual thing," he said slowly.

"Yes, I have," said Dink easily.

"Well, I don't think you have, that's all."

"But what of it?"

"Nothing," said Shifty Bill Thomas, a bit huskily; "only—I want that card you burned."

"The one I burned?" The face of Dink Harvey had gone suddenly blank. There had crept a shade of white into the place where red had colored his cheeks. His hands trembled a trifle. "The one I burned? What's the difference?"

"I want the one you burned, that's all," came doggedly from Shifty Bill Thomas, "and I'm going to have it. There it is just at the side of that fifty-dollar bill. Now, give it to me."

A long silence. Slowly the hand of Dink Harvey traveled toward the card which lay on the table—and Shifty saw that in the same hand there traveled also the deck. With one great sweep he had grasped across the table and hurried the card to his hand.

"Now I'll bet," he said shortly; "do you want to raise a little kicker of five thousand dollars—or call it?"

"I—I—call it," came from the purple lips of the man across the table. "What've you got?"

"A royal flush," Shifty Bill somewhat pleasantly said, as he turned over

the joker which had completed his hand and reached for the money.

"That's good!"

"Mitch," said Shifty Bill Thomas, an hour later, as he counted the stacks of money before him on the table of his little stateroom, "that's enough to carry a guy through most any kind of trouble. Guess I'll get a couple of new lions next season. There ain't anything to this farming business, anyhow. But I'd never have got it if it hadn't been for that match business and that kicking under the table. That was some hunch of yours, be-lieve——"

"Hunch!" said Mitch, as he rolled another cigarette. "That wasn't any hunch. I knew Dink had a straight flush ending with king, and I knew I had three aces, and that he was planning to give me the fourth for a confidence card, just so I'd bet my head off and lose anyhow, and I knew you needed that joker to fill your royal, so I just laid out and let you have it. That's all there is to it."

"Knew it!" gasped Shifty Bill. "Well, say, are you a mind reader?"

Mitch grinned.

"I told you Jereau was in town marking cards for somebody, didn't I?"

"Yeh."

"And you knew who he marked those cards for—Dink Harvey, and nobody else, so he could make that killing that he fell down on."

"Yeh." Shifty's face still was blank.

"Well," said Mitchell, with a long puff and a satisfied scraping of feet, "I'm the guy that taught Tony Jereau everything in the world he knows, that's all."



FLATTERY THAT IS FLATTERY

IT is hard for the general public to realize the immense amount of praise and flattery heaped upon prominent baseball players. Walter Johnson, the crack pitcher of the Nationals in the American League, gets more than his share of this sort of talk.

Somebody was discussing its relative sincerity with him one day when he remarked seriously:

"The only sincere flattery I ever receive is to see the batter hit at a ball after it has passed him."

The Glass-Headed Canes

By Jackson Chase

Author of "The Vacant Car," "The Missing Gold Certificates," Etc.

The secret service detective, Homer Jenness, becomes interested in a case outside his jurisdiction, and with the aid of six glass-headed canes, of widely different colors, throws new light on the mystery of Judge Seavering's murder

CHAPTER I.

JENNESS put down his newspaper, and asked: "Have you ever observed, Norman, that as a general thing, we read of the world's tragedies—big and little—in the morning?"

My friend's features, particularly his eyes and mouth, expressed a tolerant state of ennui, a sort of half regret that one had been born, and, perforce, must live. The mood did not become him. A few of his older subordinates, Radley, and two or three others, could have told you why the chief apparently did not find the game of life worth while. The office had been quiet for weeks. While my friend had not said as much, I believed that his agents had not investigated a case of importance since the affair of the vacant car and the missing Chinese. Jenness' increasing lassitude would have led me to suspect this, and the fact that he had made no mention of a more recent case practically proved it. It had become an established custom between us for Jenness to give to me the particulars whenever the secret service was working upon a problem of unusual interest, but the full measure of such a privilege had been bestowed only after an acquaintance extending over several years had proven my discretion.

The morning in question was gray and cheerless. I nodded perfunctorily in reply to the chief's remark concerning the world's tragedies, and poured myself another cup of coffee. The re-

mark came to mind later, and I took up the newspaper, rather curious to see if I could discover the article which had occasioned my friend's comment. I did not have to search long. It covered half the first page. Somewhat condensed, it read thus:

JUSTICE SEAVERING SLAIN ON DOORSTEP.

Justice Seavering, of the State supreme court, was shot in cold blood on the steps of his home at 17 Newbury Street between nine-thirty and ten o'clock last night by an unknown assassin. Word first came to the police just before midnight when Police Captain Rogers received a telephone message from Doctor Sims, the family physician, who had been called when Justice Seavering's body was found.

Although the murdered man was beyond aid when Doctor Sims arrived, the physician remained at the Seavering home to advise with Harold Seavering, a son, and to administer to the daughter, Helen, and Mrs. Seavering, both of whom are prostrated. A reporter reached the house within a half hour after news of the tragedy was given out. A policeman stood on guard, and behind him, at the right of the front doorway, a dark, wet pool reflected the rays of a distant arc light, disclosing the spot where Justice Seavering died. The reporter was admitted and shown to the library by Paige, the butler. Harold Seavering, white-faced and frequently gulping a sob, was pacing back and forth relating the details so far as he knew them. Captain Rogers, Inspectors Wood and Shannon, and Doctor Sims completed the party. Later on, Paige and Miss Tongren, a maid, were called in to give their testimony first hand, corroborating the version previously related by Harold.

The chronological events of last evening follow: At seven-thirty the Seavering family sat down to dinner. Harold stated that his father had seemed preoccupied, and, in

consequence, that the event was not marked by the usual flow of conversation regarding the day's events. At eight-ten Harold and his father went to the library to smoke, and about eight-thirty Harold left the house. At that time, his father was reading, Harold states. Some time before nine Judge Seavering was called to the telephone by Paige, who first answered the ring. No member of the household heard the conversation. About nine-forty the front-door bell rang. Miss Tongren, who answered, states that a tall man wearing a chauffeur's long, dark coat, goggles, and cap, waited outside. He stood rather beyond the range of the vestibule light, and as the electric bulb in the ceiling of the porch was not lighted she was unable to see his features. The chauffeur, for such he evidently was, asked the maid to inform Judge Seavering that the car was waiting. She remembers hearing the hum of an engine, but cannot recall with certainty if an automobile stood at the curbing of the Seavering home. The porte-cochère is not visible from the front of the house, and the auto may have been there, but Miss Tongren is not certain. She did not see it. Judge Seavering was still reading when the maid repeated the chauffeur's message. He made no comment beyond a word of acknowledgment. Shortly afterward, Helen from her sitting room saw her father pass the door, descending the stairs. He was dressed for the street, and she heard the heavy door close which separates the reception hall and the front vestibule. Miss Seavering was the last member of the family to see her father alive. Harold, returning about twenty minutes of eleven, stumbled over the dead body, and in the semidarkness at first thought it to be the form of an intoxicated man. A lighted match disclosed the horrible truth, and the boy rushed into the house sobbing and crying out that his father had been killed.

At one o'clock this morning the medical examiner had not arrived, although Doctor Sims telephoned him soon after he reached the house. Until the examiner's report is given out it is not possible to state the number or caliber of the shots which have so tragically snuffed out the life of one of the city's most eminent citizens.

As a general rule, I do not read the details of murder cases. They are far too numerous and frequently too horrible for the normal mind to enjoy. It is much better to view life's kindlier, more hopeful aspects. The account just related proved an exception, however. I had known Judge Seavering fairly well, having pleaded a case before him in the probate court some four or five years back, previous to his elevation to the supreme bench. Beyond

this I felt the intimate attachment for the man which was held by the citizens of the whole community, due largely to the fact that for a number of years Judge Seavering had been a vigorous supporter by word and deed of the various movements which may be summarized broadly under the head of good citizenship. For this reason, the news of his murder came as a great shock to me as an individual, and to the public at large.

Jenness had donned his street clothes while I read.

"An extraordinary case, Norman," he remarked, as I laid down the paper.

"A cold-blooded murder," I said. "What do you make of it?"

"I'm afraid my deductions would be superficial. The account as it appears in the paper is not a sufficient working version of the facts. Probably we'd better leave the matter for the police. No doubt they will uncover a multitude of suspicious circumstances by afternoon. They usually do—endless suspicions and no arrests."

With this final cynical shot at the police, Jenness went out, going to his office in the Federal Building, I imagined.

I walked downtown, turning the affair over in my mind, and failing to reach a conclusion from any angle. What had impelled the crime? Robbery? The reporter had made no mention of it. A woman? I dismissed the thought. Revenge? That seemed the most likely. A judge cannot escape the enmity of cranks and disappointed parties litigious. The more I thought of this phase of the affair, the firmer convinced I became that revenge had been the motive. Doubtless the murderer would turn out to be some one connected on the losing side with the principals in a recent suit before the State supreme court.

I reviewed the list for the term as near as I could remember it, as given on seldom-consulted calendar reposing on the desk which I still retained in Barrister's Hall. A taste running to the pen rather than the bar combined with a convenient though not overlarge legacy, all had united to discourage me

from active practice. The suit of a wealthy merchant, to establish as voidable certain transactions of his minor son with a stock-brokerage house, had occupied the most of the month of February, I recalled. The decision had upheld the suit. I was dividing my attention between speculation as to whether any stock brokers could have become unbalanced enough to commit murder and an endeavor to recall the other suits which had been tried, when the shrill call of the newsboys engaged my notice. One hustling little chap spread a sheet before me, walking backward the while, and not forgetting the upturned palm. I dropped a coin into it and read:

**UNITED SMELTERS LOSE SUIT.
LONG LEGAL FIGHT ENDED.**

At nine o'clock this morning the clerk of the State supreme court made public the verdict of the full bench in the now famous case begun over four years ago in which certain individuals sought to restrain the plants of the United Smelters, which are located within this State, from further operation on the grounds that the resulting fumes were injurious to vegetation and to the public health. The verdict was reached at two-twenty yesterday afternoon, after a review of the testimony occupying several weeks, but by unanimous consent of the court the decision was not given out until this morning.

After outlining the case since suit was started the writer of the article mentioned Judge Seavering's connection with the court and the fact that the majority opinion, his last work, was in line with the doctrine he had preached.

In another column, Captain Rogers, of police headquarters, was quoted as saying that in his opinion "the slayer of Judge Seavering will be found to be some one who thought the murdered man responsible for the loss of a suit at law." Evidently my own speculations had not been along lines so original as I had fancied.

I took lunch at a small Bohemian café known as "The Dutchman's," but thoughts of the murdered jurist, and the mystery of his sudden end, tended to counteract the general feeling of contentment which that establishment usually brings. A mood of restlessness

seemed to have crept over me, and I resolved to return to Parker Street and work it off by an hour at my desk. Jenness came in late in the afternoon with a bundle of newspapers under his arm.

"Have you read the latest development in the Seavering case?" was his greeting.

I guessed by my friend's manner that his prediction regarding the police had been verified, but a hasty glance through the headlines revealed that the most sensational turn of the case was due to the efforts of a reporter for one of the sensational dailies. This fellow had gained access to the Seavering home by some means known only to his profession, and quizzed the servants. One of them, so the article stated, had heard Harold Seavering and his father discuss money matters during their conversation in the library after dinner. According to this informant, whom further developments proved to be Paige, Harold had said:

"I can't help it, dad. I'm five hundred in the hole, and I've got to have the money."

The instinct of a well-trained servant had prevented Paige from lingering long enough to hear the judge's full reply. By the intonation, however, just as Paige passed out of earshot, it had indicated considerable displeasure. Around this alleged conversation, as related by Paige, the clever reporter had woven a story that placed Harold Seavering in a difficult position. The item related some of Harold's pranks in college, and hinted rather strongly of card games for high stakes, late suppers, chorus girls. The story closed with this significant paragraph:

Harold Seavering had a dispute with his father between eight o'clock and a quarter after. Directly afterward he left the house. Within a few minutes the telephone rang, and Judge Seavering talked with some one whom he evidently knew. At nine-forty a tall young man wearing goggles and a long coat appeared at the front door and asked for the judge. The judge went out, dressed for the street, and evidently by prearrangement. An hour later his body was found on the front porch. Harold Seavering claims to have stumbled over it and to have rushed immediately inside. The question arises:

Where did Harold Seavering spend his time from eight-thirty until a quarter of eleven? A direct inquiry by our reporter has failed to elicit a satisfactory answer. You owe it to yourself and to the public, Harold Seavering, to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

"I don't fancy that reporter's nasty way of putting things," I exclaimed, throwing down the sheet.

"He would be successful on the police force, I venture," Jenness observed, settling into a chair beside me, and stretching out his long legs.

"Why do you say that?" I asked rather sharply. The chief's continued satirical references to the police had turned my nerves.

"Well, they think along similar lines. That is one reason," my friend replied. "They are mighty clever in making out their case, for another. Have you heard Captain Rogers' theory?"

I confessed to having read Rogers' opinion that the slayer would turn out to be some one with a fancied grudge against Judge Seavering. Moreover, I declared rather warmly, the idea seemed entirely reasonable.

Jenness' bored smile expanded a little as he answered:

"To be sure, Norman—not only reasonable, but practically established. What! You haven't heard? Well, here is the latest bit of news from the *Daily Grouch*."

Jenness read aloud:

"Shortly after three this afternoon Captain Rogers, of police headquarters, who has been directing the search for the murderer of Judge Seavering, authorized the statement that the slayer was under surveillance, and that an arrest might be looked for very soon. Captain Rogers refused to give out the name, but stated that the suspect was a man well known in the business world, and that his arrest would cause a sensation. It is known that the man under suspicion lost heavily by a recent adverse decision of the State supreme court, and witnesses have come forward who will testify that he has acted unnaturally at times since then. It is even said that he has openly criticized Judge Seavering's attitude in the case. Captain Rogers is much gratified that his early prediction has been justified—

"I needn't read the rest, Norman. It's simply a modern application of an old axiom. The reporter applauds

Rogers for his sagacity. In return Rogers gives the reporter a valuable tip —*quid pro quo*. It always works. But in this case the sagacity is overrated, I fancy; and as for the tip— Well, we shall see."

"Captain Rogers wouldn't be flattered by your opinion," I said.

"No, he probably would not even sympathize with my opinion. But, after all, Norman, such a difference of opinion between Rogers and me is only the result of a different experience, a different training. Let us consider the cases most common to our respective professions. Probably sixty per cent of the police cases have their inception directly or indirectly in intemperance. Let us add twenty per cent for assault and violence, and ten more for the petty thief and shoplifter. That leaves ten per cent for crimes of greater cunning, such as an embezzlement or this murder. Against this, about half of my cases are counterfeiting. Smuggling covers a fourth; embezzlement, larceny, and violation of the revenue laws make up the balance. You will observe that ninety per cent of the police cases deal with what may be termed the physical side of life—appetite, violence, hunger. Practically all of my cases embrace the mental equation. They are largely made up of the efforts of clever minds to get rich at the government's expense. There is your analogy. The police deal with physical infirmities, the weaknesses of the flesh, and consequently they reason from a material basis. I cope with a class of men who act along the lines of a preconceived plan rather than upon a physical impulse. As a result, I reason from a mental basis—from the viewpoint of the criminal's mind. I am not solely dependent on the tracks left by his feet."

"You admit, then, that a murder case embracing the lowest form of physical depravity would be out of your line?" I asked.

"Much depends upon the case, Norman. A murder may be committed as the result of fixed design or of physical passion—either one. I'm inclined to think that the murderer of Judge Seav-

ering pursued a plan of action which had been carefully thought out."

"Why not look into the case and test your theories in competition with the police?" I asked, without much thought that the suggestion would be taken seriously.

Jenness smiled and shook his head. He hardly had rejected the proposition when the telephone rang. I took off the receiver, and heard an unfamiliar, rather shaky voice demand:

"Is that you, Jennie?"

I made a good guess, and passed the instrument to Jenness.

"Hello! Yes, this is 'Jennie.' How are you, Gard? Yes, I recognized your voice. Haven't heard it for some time, though. Let's see—the reunion of ninety-eight, wasn't it? What's that? Speak slower, Gard."

A long silence followed, during which Jenness settled back in his chair, taking the desk set with him, and evidently listening intently. At length Jenness took up the conversation.

"Where are you now, Gard? Er-huh! You've telephoned counsel? That's good; Hill's an able fellow. All right; I'll come right down. Don't talk, Gard. Don't say a word until we see where you're at. Good-by."

Jenness replaced the phone receiver thoughtfully. Presently he reached across and tipped back the dust-laden cover of a humidor for cigars. He leisurely snipped the end of a light Havana, fired it carefully, and then placed several of its fellows in a leather case.

I viewed the proceeding with a thrill of anticipation. With Jenness, cigars were the inevitable omen of an interesting problem. And yet I do not believe he smoked to experience the soothing effects of nicotine. It seemed a mere transient indulgence taken on with an absorbing case, and thrown off at its solution.

"I find myself in a peculiar position, solicitor," Jenness said, after a few puffs. "A few minutes ago you suggested that I look into the Seavering case, and I laughed at the idea. Now I feel compelled to undertake it. An old

friend, a classmate, is under arrest, charged with the murder. He has asked me to help him. Will you not walk down with me?"

On our way to police headquarters, Jenness briefly outlined his acquaintance with Gardner Loring. They had been classmates at college, and rather intimate. After graduation they had met infrequently at the triennial reunions until at first Loring, and later Jenness, had ceased to attend. Prior to his talk over the telephone Jenness had not heard from Loring for ten years or more. Jenness believed that Loring was engaged in the brokerage business somewhere in the city. Beyond that he knew nothing of his friend's circumstances.

Jenness had a speaking acquaintance with Captain Rogers at police headquarters, and by his courtesy we were immediately shown to the detention room in the rear of the building where Loring was being held until our arrival. With all respect for the chief's friendliness toward the man, I was not very favorably impressed by Loring's appearance. When we entered the room, he was leaning over a table, sniveling, and nervously picking his fingers. I never have been able to feel much sympathy for a man who snivels. And Loring was the big, thick-necked type of man. He pulled himself together for a moment at sight of us. I observed the shiny fat fingers as he clutched my friend's hand. Loring had no thought or answer for Jenness' word of greeting. His own predicament seemed to be all the man could think of.

"Say, Jennie, I'm in an awful mess," he whined. "Been here since six o'clock. My machine's out front, too. Blasted outrage—the questions Rogers has been asking me. Took my coat—made me drive them over here in my car, and then dragged me inside like a common drunk. And the questions, Jennie—most embarrassing, some of 'em—"

"Now, let's go back a ways, Gard. Yes, sit down; you can talk better."

Loring slumped into his seat, and Jenness took the chair across the desk.

I walked across to the window, and remained standing.

"They made you drive your car over, you say. From where?" Jenness asked presently.

"The garage. I was down there getting ready for a run up the river when these two cops walked up and nabbed me."

"What did they say?"

"Well, the fat one—Shannon, I think the other called him—reached into the tonneau and yanked out my driving coat. 'Is this yours?' he asked me, holding it up. I said 'Yes,' and then the other officer reached in under the back seat and feels around. In a minute he pulls out a pistol. 'Is that yours, too?' says Shannon.

"Before Heaven, Jennie, I never saw that pistol until that moment. I told the cop the same thing, but he kept looking at me so kind of queer that I began to get a little nervous—"

"Why were you nervous?" Jenness' sudden question held a sharp note.

"Well—you see, I didn't know—what he was driving at. I—er—"

"All right, what next?" Jenness rather snapped the inquiry.

"Let's see—what was I saying? Oh, yes—the pistol. Well, Shannon snaps open the chamber and pulls out an empty shell.

"Didn't you fire that?" he asked me. Well, about then I began asking questions myself, but the officers didn't seem to pay me any attention. Shannon threw the coat back in the car, and stepped up closer to me. 'You better take me for a little ride,' says he. 'Where to?' I asked him.

"Police headquarters." Honestly, Jennie, when he said that I had to grab hold of the wind shield to stand up—my knees were shaking so."

Jenness lit a fresh cigar, and tactfully regarded its glowing end for a moment.

Presently Loring resumed. "We drove over here about six o'clock, as I told you. That was three hours ago. It seems three weeks ago. And, Jennie, the questions they've asked me! You know, of course—they think I killed Judge Seavering—"

Jenness began a question, but Loring blundered on:

"And I can't prove that I didn't. There's the hole I'm in."

"Obviously—or you wouldn't be here. Tell me some of the questions which Captain Rogers asked you?"

"Oh, I don't know, Jennie—everything. Why, they even made me put on my driving coat and goggles, and then they brought a girl in here and asked her if I was the man."

"What did she say?"

"At first she said she thought so. Before they got through—with her she seemed sure of it."

"This begins to look serious, Gard. Stiffen up, man. They can't by any possibility hang you within a year."

"Hang me! Oh, I say, Jennie, you don't think— Say they won't, Jennie. Say they won't."

"Unless you take a brace, you'll hang yourself. Now, listen to me, and remember, I want the facts. Where were you twenty-four hours ago? Where were you at twenty minutes after nine last night?"

"I was making a call at a house on Newbury Street."

"On whom?"

"Oh, I say, old man! That's just what Rogers asked me. Can't we get around that some way? You see, I haven't been home—since yesterday—and Mrs. Loring— Oh, Jennie, I'm in an awful mess. Every dollar I've got is in her name."

Jenness made no comment. The slightest downward twitch at the corners of his mouth, however, revealed to me something of the contempt with which a wholesome mind regards such a disclosure. When my friend resumed his catechism there was a trace of unfriendliness in his voice.

"Where were you at ten o'clock?"

"Same place."

"At eleven?"

"Driving up the river."

"Alone?"

"No."

"At midnight?"

"The Wayside Inn—North Melton."

"When did you leave there?"

"This afternoon."

Jenness stood up and drew on his gloves.

"I think we'll walk along, Gard," he said, and then, as an afterthought:

"Oh, I forgot to ask if you were acquainted with Judge Seavering."

"I knew him by sight, and by, er—reputation. Nothing more, I swear it, Jennie. I never spoke to the man in my life."

Jenness looked squarely in Loring's eyes, and asked, in measured tones: "Not even over the telephone?"

"I'd take my oath on a stack o' Bibles. I'll swear by all that's—"

"Save your oaths, Gard; you may have need of them. Good night."

"Wait a minute, Jennie. What am I going to—"

Jenness closed the door behind us without answering.

"Norman, how many men are there in this city at this moment who would lose some of their self-respect should the glare of publicity suddenly expose them as they stand?"

We had talked the length of the long corridor, nearly to Captain Rogers' office, before I answered:

"A hundred or two, probably."

"More than that, I fancy."

Captain Rogers received us cordially. He accepted one of Jenness' perfectos, and fairly oozed of good nature and self-approval as he recited the day's events, in substance about as Loring had told us, except that he dwelt at length upon Miss Tongren's identification of Loring as the chauffeur who had asked her to notify Judge Seavering that the car was waiting.

"What led you first to suspect Mr. Loring?" Jenness inquired. "But perhaps you don't care to tell me, captain, since of course you realize that I am interested in his defense."

"You have undertaken a large contract, Mr. Jenness. Take it from me. We've nothing to conceal—not one thing." The captain made the statement with a swagger.

"The crossing patrolman," he continued, "at the corner of Newbury Street, where it runs into the boulevard,

saw Loring's car turn up the river drive just after ten o'clock. He was going at a pretty good clip, and the patrolman took the number—I'll make him a sergeant for that. See if I don't. Well, this morning I received a postal card. Got it here on my desk somewhere."

Rogers pawed over a pile of papers, and finally located the missive. Jenness read the card and passed it to me. The communication was printed in angular characters:

Look in auto number fifteen-forty-seven, under seat.

There was no signature. I returned the card to Captain Rogers, and Jenness asked:

"Captain, in your opinion, who sent that postal?"

"Some one who was passing by at the time, probably."

"Then why is the message anonymous?"

"I should say that whoever wrote it didn't want his name to get into the newspapers."

"That is possible, but how does it happen that he was able to tell you just where the pistol would be found?"

"You've got me there, Mr. Jenness. Anyway, I don't see what difference it makes. We found the pistol, and landed our man. That's the main issue in this business."

"Pardon the digression, captain. I think you were relating the circumstances which led up to Mr. Loring's arrest."

"Oh, yes. After we'd got all of the particulars in the Seavering case, I happened to come upon the crossing patrolman's report. Right on top o' that along came this post card. Of course, the rest is plain sailing. The coat, pistol, and one empty shell would have given us reason enough to hold Loring, but when we pile on top o' that Miss Tongren's positive identification, and the fact that the bullet taken from Judge Seavering's body just fits the shell, there's nuthin' to it, Mr. Jenness—absolutely nuthin' to it."

"So the bullet fits the empty shell in

the pistol found in Loring's car, eh? Was it of an unusual caliber, captain?"

"No—just a common thirty-eight. I understand how that bullet might not cut a whole lot of ice if we didn't have other damaging evidence to go with it. But look the case over, Mr. Jenness. Look at the coat, the pistol, the empty shell, the maid's identification, the fact that Loring has a car, the fact that he refuses to say where he was after eight o'clock, and then say if you don't agree that we have a perfect case from start to finish. You can take it from me—Mr. Loring is in bad."

"The first requirement of a perfect circumstantial case is a *motive*, captain." Jenness spoke quietly, and yet his slight emphasis nettled Rogers into making a retort which perhaps later he regretted.

"Don't you suppose I know that? I told you this case was perfect, and it is. Now, see here: Mr. Loring—his firm—lost a lot of money by the outcome of that suit before the State supreme court in February. You remember the case? Well, some rich bug had a son who was playing the market. He traded with Loring—the boy did—on a margin. By and by along comes a slump and cleaned him out—the boy, I mean—of over thirty thousand dollars. Next thing the old man gets wind of it, and he brings suit against Loring for the whole amount, claiming that his son was a minor, and that his contracts were voidable, or something like that. All this happened two or three years ago, you understand. Well, they fought the suit—Loring and his crowd—from one court to another, and finally it went before the full bench last February. Now, to make a long story short, Loring lost. He lost his case and a pot of money. Judge Seavering wrote the decision, and he hit Loring pretty hard. Loring mulls the matter over a couple o' months, tanks up good and plenty last night, on the strength of his grouch and a few high balls, calls up the judge about something or other, gets him to come to the door, and shoots him on the spot. The excitement probably sobered Loring a little. He gets

scared, jumps in his car, and hits the pike. Don't you think I've got it framed down pretty fine, Mr. Jenness?"

"To a science, captain, comparable in its exactitude only to some such a science as—er—medicine, we will say. Your train of reasoning astounds me by its simplicity."

Captain Rogers tipped back in his chair, and took several long pulls on his cigar. Evidently he was well pleased. I suspected there might be a depth to my friend's remarks which the captain failed to reach, however.

"By the way, captain, may I see the coat which your men found in Loring's car?"

"Of course you can—sure."

A station man fetched the garment, and Jenness slipped it on. It was long and loose, made of cloth showing a pronounced plaid pattern, and having large patch pockets.

Before returning the coat, my friend turned back the facing of the right-hand inside pocket. It bore the tag of a well-known tailor, and underneath was the owner's name. Jenness held it up for me to read: "Gardner Loring," in neat script. Evidently the garment's ownership could not be disputed.

It was after ten when we left police headquarters, but Jenness hailed a taxi and directed that we be driven to Newbury Street. The chief seemed preoccupied, and I had learned by experience that questions would avail me nothing. My thoughts reverted to the suit against Loring, doubtless because I felt more competent to review a case at law than I did to pass upon a murder mystery which seemed to be taking on complexity every hour. I recalled that there were one or two features brought out in the final hearing which were unique in American jurisprudence. One of them hinged upon the contention that Loring had merely acted as an agent, having never actually owned the stock in transfer, and therefore, that a suit to declare a contract for its purchase as voidable should be brought against the principal, or seller, and not against the broker. I had poised this proposition to a fine balance when the taxi suddenly

came to a stop in front of the Seavering residence.

"There are occasions," said Jenness, as we covered the thirty feet or more between the street and porch steps, "when nothing answers quite so well as the truth. I believe this to be such an occasion."

To the servant who opened the door, Jenness passed his own card with a request to see Harold Seavering. "His own card," sounds a little odd. It is perhaps necessary to state that Jenness always carried a long leather case divided into eight or ten pockets, each large enough for an ordinary visiting card.

"A few words engraved on a bit of cardboard," my friend frequently declared, "will secure admission quicker than false whiskers—and by the front entrance."

I do not at the moment recall the entire list. There were cards presenting a doctor, a clergyman, the secretary of a charity, a book agent, and several others which may come to mind later.

It was quite dark on the porch, and I reflected that the murderer had chosen a safe ambush. While we were waiting Jenness struck a match and surveyed the spot where Judge Seavering had died. It had been scrubbed clean. Just as the match flickered out, Jenness glanced upward at the electric bulb in the ceiling of the porch. Evidently it was still out of order.

The maid returned presently, and admitted us. Harold Seavering received us in the library on the second floor. Tiers of books stood shoulder high on three sides of the room. An open fireplace took up most of the fourth. Young Seavering was seated between the fireplace and a long reading table which stood in the center of the room. He displayed evidence of deep grief, but no nervousness. He did, however, seem vastly relieved to learn that we were not newspaper men.

"My experience with one of the reporters has been disagreeable," the young man remarked.

"Yes, I've read that you were numbered among the suspects." The chief's

smile compensated the boldness of the assertion. Before young Seavering could frame a reply Jenness continued: "I dare say you have not heard that the police have made an arrest?"

"No; have they? When? Who is it?" The young man's face expressed surprise, gratification, and relief, all in one.

Jenness gave the desired information, and then asked: "Do you know Mr. Loring, or did you ever hear Judge Seavering speak of him?"

Harold had never heard of the man. Jenness related as much of the case against Loring as seemed necessary, and explained his connection with the suspected man. From this point Jenness spoke of the judge's intimate friends. Had he a great number, and who were they? Harold's reply was in effect that while his father had a large circle of friends and acquaintances, there had been not over a dozen with whom he associated intimately.

"If you will humor me, I'll jot down the names," Jenness said quietly. "Of course, it is very unlikely that any of them can be connected with the affair," he added. "In fact, the testimony against Loring seems conclusive. Still, in order to be able to cover the whole ground, should anything new develop, such a list might be of value. Of course, it will be regarded as sacredly confidential."

Jenness won his point. Most of the dozen I knew by reputation. They were the sort of men with whom one would naturally expect a man of Judge Seavering's attainments and tastes to form ties of friendship.

"And now I have asked about your father's friends," Jenness remarked, after the list was completed. "Do you know if your father had bitter or even passive enemies? Have you, for example, ever heard him speak of any one in particular?"

Young Seavering considered the question before replying. At length he stated that he could think of no one. My friend had won the young man's confidence by degrees, and he approached with care the subject of the

argument over money affairs between Harold and his father on the previous evening.

"I suppose the reporter garbled the conversation more or less?" Jenness began.

"On the contrary, I'm afraid he got it about right." Harold seemed to make the admission regretfully. Jenness remained silent, waiting for an explanation.

"I did ask father for money, as Paige said. But the nasty hints published in the paper as to what I wanted the money for are absurd. I don't suppose we can blame Paige for what the reporter puts down out of mind; but, anyway, I've discharged him. We want no tattlers in this house."

Jenness acquiesced with a nod.

"A very proper procedure, I should say—and—er—pardon the question—do you smoke in this room?"

Young Seavering's hasty affirmative and the passing of Jenness' cigar case served to relieve the situation. The chief smoked a moment before resuming his inquiry.

"I have gathered, Mr. Seavering, that you prefer not to disclose the object for which you needed five hundred dollars? A rather tidy sum, that."

"Frankly, Mr. Jenness, I do prefer not to say. Of course, if you think it necessary—"

"No, I think we may dismiss that for the present. May I ask if your father gave you the sum you asked for?"

"He did not. But can't we drop this sort of thing? You must realize—Of course, you can see that I'm devilish cut up. Nobody regrets more than I that my father's last words were not—I won't discuss it. That's all. I simply won't talk about it."

Young Seavering had risen to his feet, and his protest was supplemented by the simple gestures of the man who speaks truthfully and from the heart. I felt relieved that Jenness seemed content to change the subject, for my sympathies, strange enough, were with the younger man.

Jenness asked permission to question Miss Tongren for a moment before our

departure, and Harold consented. He walked toward the rear of the house to call her. Miss Tongren entered the room shortly afterward. Harold presented her easily, without reference to her position in the household. It was rather decent in him, I thought. The maid was a tall, statuesque Swedish girl, with the fair skin and light hair peculiar to her people. Her placid, well-colored features and rounded figure were not unattractive, and I fancied that young Seavering regarded her in a manner not wholly consistent with the relation of master and servant. I remembered Miss Tongren as the young woman who had admitted us.

Jenness indicated a chair, and put the girl at her ease.

"You ordinarily respond to rings for the front entrance, do you not?" he began.

"Most always I do, sir."

"And how many times did you go to the front door last evening—after dark, and previous to the time Judge Seavering went out?"

"It wass two times, I tank, sir. Once about half past seven—yust before dinner, it wass; and the other time wass that tall man who—"

"The gentleman whom you identified at police headquarters?"

"I am not sure, but it looked like him. He was tall—even taller than you, sir—and the goggles and coat, yust the same as—"

"Pardon the interruption, Miss Tongren. Was the man as tall, for example, as Mr. Seavering here?"

The girl hesitated before answering:

"I—yes, sir. Yust about the same," she said finally.

"Now, Miss Tongren, can you remember about the porch light—the ceiling light, you know. Was it lighted on both occasions when you went to the door?"

"The last time it wass out. I remember that, for I couldn't see the man's face much at all; but the first time—now I'm not sure."

Jenness gave the girl plenty of time to consider the matter.

"Ja—now I remember it. It ban

lighted before dinner," she exclaimed suddenly. "I pick up one of Mrs. Wylie's gloves where it fall, and run after her. Of course, I'd not see it if the light ban out," she finished naïvely.

"There's sound reasoning for you, Norman—right and proper. Thank you very much, Miss Tongren. There's one other detail, by the way: Captain Rogers states that at police headquarters you positively identified Mr. Loring as the man who gave you the message for Judge Seavering; but you have just stated that you are not sure—only that the goggles and coat were the same."

"How could I be sure of the man's face, when it wass so dark I couldn't see it—on the porch?"

"Your identification, then, is entirely of the coat and goggles?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose so; and because he wass tall."

"Do you recall, Miss Tongren, the color of the necktie worn by Mr. Loring when you saw him to-night?"

"Why—let me see. It wass a blue one, I tank, sir."

"Mr. Loring wore a bright red tie, Miss Tongren. Isn't it a little singular that you failed to observe that, while, at the same time, you are so positive of the pattern of the coat worn by the masked chauffeur, which, at the most, you could have beheld but a moment in semidarkness, whereas you had probably five minutes' time to see Mr. Loring's red tie, in good light as well?"

"I don't know, sir. I remembered the coat because—" The girl hesitated, flushed, and her eyes seemed to hold a question as she looked quickly across to young Seavering. It was a much-confused and slightly defiant young woman who resumed:

"I remember how the coat looked because—because I do. Is it so strange, sir?"

"And you're quite sure, Miss Tongren, that it is not because you'd seen that particular pattern before?"

This time the girl went white. A nameless fear stared from her eyes as the chief stepped quickly forward and

threw open a closet door at the right of the fireplace.

"It is quite likely, I presume," Jenness was saying, "that this garment here may refresh your memory. Is it yours, Mr. Seavering?"

Jenness held up a coat like Loring's in every detail—pattern, pockets, and all!

Miss Tongren rushed from the room, sobbing; and with a deprecatory shrug Harold Seavering walked quickly after her, without answering.

CHAPTER II.

We passed out of the Seavering house, unaccompanied. The hall finish was of heavy oak. As I closed the vestibule door behind me I noticed how dark it seemed outside, after the brilliance of the reception hall. Jenness preceded me. He fumbled a little with the outer door latch, and I brushed against him. Finally it responded, and we stepped outside. The thought came to me of how unprepared Judge Seavering must have been.

He had just stepped down probably, and faced rather to the right to close the door behind him, when the assassin's bullet came from behind—a cowardly shot. It had entered just under the shoulder blade, according to the medical examiner's report. I wondered if it were possible for a man to think after receiving such a wound, if there might be one possible flash of consciousness before the spark goes out and a soul passes into the unknown.

The porch was about ten feet wide, and perhaps twice as long. Jenness paused somewhere in the center, peering overhead and groping upward.

"Lend me your back, will you, Norman?" he requested presently. "I wish to have a look at this light."

I stooped over as the boys do in the game of leapfrog, and Jenness climbed to my shoulders.

"Steady now," he called, in a low voice.

Jenness seemed to be fiddling with something. I could feel the vibrations as his heels pressed into my shoulder

muscles. There was a sudden flash of light, followed by sudden darkness. After considerable more fiddling Jenness jumped down.

"All right, old fellow. You did splendidly as Atlas. Now let's run along home. I think we have made a creditable beginning."

"All that we have found out, so far as I can see," I remarked while we were waiting for a crosstown car, "goes to back up the police case. You may place a whole lot of stock in Loring's yarn about late suppers at an upriver resort; and his painful attempt to conceal the identity of his companion may sound all straight to you; but I'm hanged if I believe it."

We were halfway home before Jenness responded.

"You don't like Loring?" he said.

"Perhaps I did not see him to advantage," I evaded.

"No; and I have seen him to advantage. He looked better back in the nineties—wearing a blue jersey and padded trousers. You should have seen that Princeton game, the last before we graduated. But I'll not weary you. Why aren't you equally suspicious of young Mr. Seavering?"

Again I evaded. "Perhaps I am," I said.

"But you're not. You're biased, Norman. You disregard the facts, and build your opinion on personal prejudice. You like young Seavering, therefore he's innocent. You dislike Loring, therefore he's guilty."

"So far," I responded, "my prejudice, as you term it, seems to be as reliable as your analysis. You've asked a number of questions, and poked around here and there, but what have you to show for your trouble? What do you actually know about the case any more than—"

Jenness interrupted:

"I know that both Loring and Harold Seavering had an opportunity to commit the murder. Neither of the two has established an alibi. Both fit the description of the assassin in that they are above six feet tall, and both apparently have plaid coats; but as it hap-

pened neither one is guilty. I am certain of it, Norman. I don't as yet know who is guilty; that is, I don't know the murderer's name, or where he lives, or what he looks like; but I do know some of his characteristics—enough of them, in fact, so that I could pick out my man from among a thousand others."

My friend's extraordinary boast staggered me. I reviewed the incidents of the evening one by one. Presumably I had seen and heard everything relating to the case; and I certainly did not feel competent to name the suspect, to say nothing of picking him out of a crowd.

We had ridden nearly to Parker Street before I observed that the chief carried a newspaper. It was rolled into the form of a cornucopia, with one corner folded over the large end. Jenness held the paper rigidly upright before him, and he seemed to take great pains that nobody brushed against it.

At length my curiosity proved to be stronger than my discretion.

"What on earth have you there?" I asked.

"Bric-a-brac, Norman. An odd bit of tracery absolutely unlike any other in the world. It is, in my opinion, a splendid example of decorative art as first attempted by prehistoric man."

I wondered where he could have picked up such a treasure, if by any chance the priceless tracery had been taken from the Seavering library. The matter bothered me not a little. While I believed Jenness to be the soul of rectitude, also—because I knew him so intimately—I was aware that he had a singular obsession to possess any rare or beautiful curio. I could not bring myself to believe, however, that he had stolen the tracery which he guarded so carefully.

Once we were beyond prying eyes in the privacy of our lodgings, I expected that Jenness would exhibit his treasure.

I was to be disappointed, however. The chief carried the paper cone directly to the small room connected with our apartments, designed, I suppose, for a kitchenette, but which Jenness had converted into a sort of experiment

room for work such as plate developing, simple qualitative analysis, and the like.

I must own to an intense curiosity to know what that newspaper contained. I could hear Jenness fussing with his pots and pans for some time. Sleep finally put an end to my speculation—until morning at least.

An engagement, made some time before, took me out of the city early the following day, and I did not see Jenness again until that evening. It was Sunday. I recall the lines of promenaders along the park walks, visible down through the treetops from the window seats in our living room. Jenness was absent when I returned. He came in an hour later; and behind him Keno, the black corridor boy, labored under a half dozen pasteboard boxes of singular shape. Each box was about three feet long—or high, as it happened to stand—and about four inches square as to other dimensions; very much like an elongated glove case, except that the opening was at the end. The six boxes were held together by two narrow straps.

"Set them covers up, Keno. Right and proper, my boy. Here's a dime for you." Keno favored us before departure with a full view of incisors such as have brought fame to at least one man.

"Yes, sah; thank you, sah," he chuckled.

"And now, solicitor, what may we have here, do you fancy?" Jenness began unfastening the covers, which were secured by a tape-and-buckle arrangement.

"As you know, I have a penchant for odd canes," he said. "I think I have a dozen or more now; but none of them, I assure you"—he flipped back the covers one by one—"are arrayed like one of these."

Each of the tall boxes held a walking stick, and the distinguishing feature of each stick was the flashy color of its polished head, which was large, and shaped much like a pear. The six heads were alike as to form, but unmistak-

ably different as to coloring. They were positively dazzling. Vermilion, orange, light green, violet, coral, and gilt were the full list, as I remember it.

"Are they valuable—made of precious stones, or anything like that?" I asked, blinking at the flashy array.

"No, Norman, they are not precious stones—just plain glass. But they are valuable—valuable because they are unique, distinguished, you know. Take this one, for example." Jenness selected the stick with an orange head. "Have you ever seen anything like it?"

I confessed that I never had. Jenness replaced the cane, and glanced at his watch.

"My, but it's getting late. Come, solicitor; it's time we were dressing. We're calling this evening—calling on a list of notables, too. We must look our smartest, for our prospective hosts are critical, I've heard. Aristocrats, you know, blue-blooded, butlered, and conservative. Then we have an artist or two, talented, manicured, and properly eccentric. Toward the end there may be some who are merely famous, or notorious, depending upon the paper you read. But they're all alike to us, solicitor—aren't they?"

My friend seemed in a rare humor, and I asked no questions. Over my waistcoat buttons, however, and over my tie as well, I thought a good deal about these ridiculous glass-headed canes. What charm had Jenness, ordinarily of quiet and discriminating tastes, seen in such flashy trinkets?

But if I had thought that my friend exhibited peculiar taste in purchasing the glass-headed canes, I certainly suspected him to be unbalanced when he proposed carrying one for the evening. I could imagine the contrast—evening clothes and a stick with a huge, vermillion head! Just as we were leaving Jenness rang for Keno, and to my dismay directed that he carry the entire six, boxes and all, to the waiting taxi which had been ordered by phone. I don't doubt that I showed my astonishment, and the chief seemed greatly amused.

"I value all of them so impartially

that I've decided not to leave any behind," he declared, still smiling. "Besides, I never can tell just which one I shall need. For example, should we visit a man of Irish birth, the green stick would be proper; or one who is literary—then we should carry violet; or an actor, we will say—gilt would be the thing. See the idea?"

My friend's absurd humor seemed worse than his preposterous canes. And before the evening was over I had an overdose of both. Of all the adventures and excursions I have undertaken in company with Jenness that Sunday evening's round of calls seemed the most ridiculous. My friend's behavior was most extraordinary. Had I not known that he never drank to excess, I should have been convinced that he had wined not wisely, but well. Few of the notables on whom we called were personally known by either of us, and the chief changed his name and profession as frequently as he changed canes. Now it was the card of Reverend Hartness Bennett which the long leather case gave out. Next it might be Justin Fowler, M. D. I remember only those two, although he made use of several others.

My companion appeared to be straying from one end of the city to another, merely to utter the first fantastic phrase that entered his head after presenting his card and speaking a formal word of greeting. I did observe, however, that we apparently were expected wherever we went. Of course, the usages of society make severe demands upon a conversationalist. The ball must be kept in the air, and sometimes it may be necessary to draw to some extent on one's imagination so to do. But Jenness seemed unable to talk sense or state a fact throughout the evening. And those confounded canes were always lugged into the talk. Indeed, before the evening was over, I formed the opinion that the chief carried them solely to make conversation when other subjects failed. At any rate, they should be given full credit for accomplishing their purpose, if that were it. I will describe our call on Judge Clinton

at the Victoria, as a fair example of what took place wherever we stopped.

Jenness selected the cane with the vermillion head before entering. He had previously used the green-headed stick to call upon the Traceys on Commonwealth Street; the violet had been chosen as fitting for a word with Humot, the sculptor; the gilt stick had engaged the notice of David Norwick, the playwright, on sight; and the orange and coral had been fully as effective at two other houses, the first of our calls.

As we were going up in the elevator at the Victoria, I happened to recall that all of the persons we had visited were included in the list of Judge Seaving's intimate friends, given us by Harold the night before. I wondered if Jenness had adopted this as a novel method of studying the personal characteristics of each one at close range. So far, my impressions had been most favorable, and had it not been for the glass-headed canes I believe I should have passed an enjoyable evening. Judge Clinton was a member of the supreme court, although a comparatively recent appointee. I knew very little of his legal abilities. From current gossip, I'd gathered that his chief claim to distinction lay in the fact that a political friend had been elected governor. I was rather keen to see the man. At the time of his appointment, the papers had stated that he was forty-five and unmarried. His apartments were on the tenth floor. The view from his sitting room reminded me of our own outlook across Parker Street.

The room was well furnished with a suggestion of warmth contributed by the hangings which favored the dark-red tones. The decorations included full-colored marine views, bright landscapes, and a generous sprinkling of nude subjects. The general effect, if it could be taken as fairly expressing the tastes of the owner, hardly supported the impression of a studious or judicial atmosphere. At first glance, however, it was an attractive room.

We had been seated but a moment when Judge Clinton entered from an adjoining room. He was a giant in

stature, and the possessor of a pleasing personality. I judged he had been a good "mixer" among the boys in his political days. Directly we had spoken a word of greeting, Jenness began his fabrication of fact and fancy. Judge Clinton addressed my friend as "Mr. Smith." Smith was the charity worker in Jenness' cardcase, I recalled. The ensuing conversation confirmed my memory.

"I am endeavoring," Jenness began, nicely balancing the vermillion-headed stick between his knees, "to secure reliable data as to the percentage of destitute women who have reached their present condition as a result of intemperance, and I have thought that you"—the chief spied his story like an auctioneer—"might be able to assist me very materially—" and so on. Jenness talked a steady stream for fully five minutes in elaboration of his inquiry, and in apology for occupying the judge's valuable time, before that gentleman secured an opening sufficient to voice a reply. When he finally grasped the opportunity, it was in effect that, as a justice of the State supreme court, he had very slight experience with the class of cases in which my friend was interested. Some one connected with the municipal court, he thought, might better be able to give the desired information.

Jenness—or rather Smith—seemed greatly disappointed. He renewed his apologies, and gracefully veered the conversation to other lines, caroming, as I remember it, from a compliment extolling the color scheme in the sitting room to the critical examination of a Venetian scene which hung in the wall space facing us. Jenness walked closer for a better view. In resuming his seat the precious cane nearly slipped out of his grasp. I had detected the judge several times in a rather prolonged stare at that glaring, bright-red head, and he grasped the incident to speak of the unusual walking stick which my friend carried.

"Yes, I picked that up in Tabriz," Jenness answered. "Its coloring rather shocks the American eye," he tattled on.

"We're so accustomed to somber tones. But I value it because of long association. The old fakir from whom I purchased it assured me that I would continue to have good luck so long as I preserved this glass head unbroken. Pure superstition, I presume—nothing else. But do you know, I have lived up to it for so long now that I'm actually afraid something will happen to it."

The judge smiled tolerantly. Evidently he was not greatly impressed. Jenness stood up.

"Well, we must be going, Norman. No, judge, I can manage my coat very well, thank you—if you'll kindly take charge of my stick. I'm so afraid of breaking it."

The call on Judge Clinton proved to be the last for the evening, except that we went to see Loring.

We found Loring in cell No. 40 at the Hector Street jail, where he expected to stay until the date of his preliminary hearing. In the meantime bail had been refused. The man was in a fearful shape. His wife had called earlier in the evening, and her visit evidently had not helped matters.

We broke away finally. Loring promised to await developments for a day or so, and he seemed more hopeful.

The clocks were ringing two when we stepped out of the elevator at Parker Street. Keno had taken up the six long boxes containing the glass-headed canes, and set them before the door leading to our rooms. Jenness carried them directly to his kitchen laboratory. I wondered if the glass-headed canes would eventually occupy a case in company with the contents of the mysterious newspaper parcel, brought in the night before. It had been a strenuous evening, and I went immediately to bed.

A folded paper stood in my coffee cup as I sat down to breakfast Monday morning. It was a note from Jenness, and, like all of his messages, brief and to the point. The first sentence brought me up standing.

I know who killed Judge Seavering. Shall spend the day trying to find out the motive. You might call at the Federal Building late in the afternoon, if you wake

in time, and see if I have been successful.

H. J.

I looked at my watch. It was ten o'clock. I still had six hours to wait. How they dragged. After three the minute hand positively seemed not to move. But it crept around, as minute hands will, in those seconds when I glanced away, and exactly at four o'clock I entered the Federal Building. Jenness was at his desk in his private office on the sixth floor.

"I have been hoping you would arrive first," he said. "We shall have other visitors shortly."

The chief busied himself for a few moments with some papers on his desk, and I made myself comfortable in the little alcove in the opposite corner of the room. Jenness was smoking. A tray full of cigar stumps told of his activities during the day. Radley came in with a card about quarter after four. Jenness glanced at it, and asked:

"Is everything ready?" Receiving an affirmative reply, he said: "Show them into room sixty, and see that they are made comfortable."

Room 60, I knew, was the next one south of us, and ordinarily used for a storage room. I wondered at the time who was to occupy it. Radley presently entered with a second card. Jenness read the name, and nodded.

"Well, if it isn't our old friend Smith," said the visitor, before he was through the door. It was Judge Clinton.

"The note which I sent you bore another name, if you recall," Jenness remarked indifferently.

"Oh, yes, to be sure. Is he about—the writer of this note?" Judge Clinton spread out a letter, and glanced at it through a pair of glasses held in his left hand.

"I am Mr. Jenness."

"The deuce you say. And then Smith is—"

"Dead," soberly finished my friend. While Judge Clinton was digesting the statement, Jenness picked up some papers from his desk, and, after arranging them, he continued:

"In my letter, as you will observe,

judge, I stated that I wished your opinion regarding some developments connected with the murder of your associate, Judge Seavering. The questions are such that only one in your position could be expected to answer them. I have no great knowledge of legal matters myself, and even our friend, Mr. Norman, here"—Jenness nodded in my direction—"able lawyer though he is, does not feel competent to make a decision."

"Your opinion flatters me, I should say," Clinton responded, accepting a chair.

"Not at all—quite the contrary. Now, first of all, judge, I wish to give you a description of how Judge Seavering was murdered; second, I shall lay before you the evidence we have against the murderer—"

"And after that?"

"I shall ask you to decide if we have a case. Is that satisfactory?"

"You ask me to assume quite a responsibility."

"As to that, perhaps we can better judge by the circumstances. Shall we proceed?"

Judge Clinton acquiesced with a shrug of the shoulders, and Jenness pressed a button on his desk, labeled "Stenographer."

"I may wish to review this matter," Jenness explained. "My secretary will report the interview—with your permission, of course."

"You have it certainly," Justice Clinton replied. It may have been fancy, but I thought he spoke a little absently, as if, behind the mask of indifference, he was doing some rapid thinking. The stenographer sat at Jenness' right, next the window. Judge Clinton occupied the chair to the left of the desk, facing Jenness—and the light.

"For the present," Jenness began, "we will not concern ourselves with the motive which actuated the slayer of Judge Seavering. Rather, we will attempt to follow the procedure which he adopted to carry out his design. Let us begin at the telephone booth from which he called the Seavering home at nine-twenty-one Saturday evening. The

telephone company has supplied both the time of the call, and its origin. The connection was made from Klein's drug store in Tompkins Square.

"We will assume that the murderer finished telephoning about nine-twenty-five, and that he went directly to Newbury Street. Probably he walked. Cab drivers possess more than an ordinary faculty for remembering faces. The murderer was an astute, careful man. Therefore, he walked. From Klein's drug store to the Seavering home by the usual route is thirty-eight hundred and odd feet. One should cover the distance in ten minutes. The murderer took twenty. Something delayed him. It may be that his nerve failed, and he hesitated, or that he made a detour to avoid acquaintances, but in view of what we know it seems more likely that as he approached the house he felt the need of some sort of a disguise. The weapon, of course, he had with him. As he turned onto Newbury Street, however, he could see that the street light was rather near to the Seavering home, and—"

"Pardon the interruption," Judge Clinton broke in, "but are you not drawing rather freely on your imagination? Of course, you cannot expect me to pass an opinion on mere conjecture."

Jenness fired a fresh cigar before resuming:

"I am endeavoring to show—and I believe I'm right—that the murderer had not thought of a disguise until that time, and, therefore, that he adopted the first means to hand, not fully realizing at the moment that it was a master stroke of cunning. But that doesn't matter. An automobile stood at the curbing two or three blocks south of Seavering's. It was vacant. In passing, the murderer observed a plaid driving coat on the rear seat. Doubtless it seemed to have been placed there for his special convenience. Luckily it was a large size, and, as he explored the pockets, he felt a pair of goggles. The disguise was complete."

"All this sounds very well as a theory," interposed the judge. "It is an interesting narrative; but I have no time

for such amusement. Unless you can present something more convincing in the way of evidence, I must ask you to excuse me."

"We are coming to the evidence right now," said Jenness. "I trust you will bear with me a moment longer." The judge kept his seat, and my friend continued:

"Doers of dark deeds abhor light. They feel perhaps that light—enough of it—would encourage introspection, strengthen the demands of conscience, and defeat their ends. In the case we are considering, possibly the man about to kill feared that his victim might recognize his assassin, for thought is even quicker than a bullet. At any rate, before ringing the bell he reached overhead and unscrewed the electric bulb in the ceiling of the front porch. Now, judge, I call your attention to this point. It is our first of importance. The murderer had nothing to stand on. He was alone. To have reached that bulb, he must have been at least six feet two inches tall. I am five feet ten, and I fell short of it by a full four inches."

Jenness gave attention for a moment to a smoldering cigar, and then added:

"My friend Loring, by the way, is about my height."

"If you think to save Loring on that point, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," Clinton remarked. "Even if you establish that the—er—murderer, unscrewed the bulb, how will you sustain your contention that he had nothing to stand on? He might have carried a—er—box, for example."

"Or—er—a stepladder, I dare say." Jenness did not conceal his sarcasm. "However, we won't argue the point. Having disconnected the light, the assassin rang the bell. We know that he wore his goggles, and stood so that the maid who responded did not see his features. She did, however, particularly notice the plaid coat. It is likely, after the desperate work was done—after a slight pressure of the finger had taken a valuable life—that the murderer slunk through the shrubbery to the street, taking off the coat as he ran. Probably his first impulse was to con-

ceal it. But he looked down the street, and saw the auto from which the coat had been taken. Then came the cunning inspiration. If only it could be done! He walked boldly down, throwing the coat on the rear seat and the pistol under it, as he passed. The disposal of his disguise gave the murderer confidence. His next move proved his audacity. He bought a post card, and sent a message to police headquarters. The message was printed so that no telltale tricks of handwriting could betray him. It read: 'Look in auto number fifteen-forty-seven, under seat.' That message resulted in the arrest of Loring the following evening."

"Very well executed," Clinton remarked. "But you'd scarcely be able to present your effort in a court of law. The law demands facts. It does not accept speculation, no matter how clever it is."

"Let us hope the law will be satisfied." I thought there was a challenging note in Jenness' retort. "Now, we must go back to the electric bulb, and the question of whether a tall man stood on the floor or a short man stood on a box. I used the steady back of my good friend Norman." Jenness turned in my direction, and Judge Clinton nodded.

"The electric bulb merely had been loosened to effect a disconnection, and put out the light," the chief resumed; "perhaps by half a turn. Mr. Norman supported me without complaint while I removed the bulb from its socket and placed it in a cone-shaped wrapper twisted from a newspaper which I happened to have in my pocket. I took the bulb home, and examined it under a glass. I found it to be most interesting." Jenness was provokingly deliberate.

"I'll show you how it looked," he said presently. Radley entered the room, and walked to a curtained booth not far from the alcove where I sat. Jones, the stenographer, drew down the window shades, and Jenness stood up with a long pointer in his hand.

"All right, Radley," he said. There was a sputter in the curtained booth,

instantly followed by the hum of an arc lamp. From a small aperture in the curtains a stream of bright light widened horizontally to the blank wall above Jenness' desk. A balloon-shaped shadow was visible in the center of the lighted space, and across it were the imprints of a huge thumb and four huge fingers.

"The bulb was rather sooted and dusty," the chief resumed. "It started hard, and the assassin left us an excellent finger print, if you will observe, judge—and this is our second link—of a left hand."

"Very interesting, I'm sure." There was an inflection to Clinton's remark that I was unable to analyze. It was so dark I couldn't see his face.

"I call your attention to two features in the ridge marks of this hand," continued Jenness, placing his pointer just above the central pocket of the middle finger.

"That dark patch marks a scar. On the finger which made this print, probably it does not exceed one-tenth of an inch in diameter. Observe the general outline. It is shaped wonderfully like a British coronet, you see. And now let us look at the second distinguishing mark." The pointer moved across to the thumb.

"Right here where the arches separate and the loop begins, you observe a triangle. In its center we can distinguish a perfect capital letter T." Jenness dropped the pointer, but remained standing.

"And now, gentlemen," he resumed, "we know that the finger prints of no two individuals are alike. The ridge marks of detached fingers belonging to different persons may so closely resemble each other that only an expert can distinguish them; but, given a clear print of four digits—or, as in this case, five—so many dissimilarities will appear in every case, that even an amateur can discern them. I ask you to bear this point in mind while Mr. Radley presents the third link in our case."

There was a second sputter in the curtained booth, the ensuing hum, and shaft of light extending across to the

wall. It required but a glance to see that the second figure was exactly like the original, even to the coronet on the middle finger and the capital T on the thumb. Careful comparison revealed that the fingers in the figure to the right were at an angle slightly different than they appeared in the one to the left, and the second balloon-shaped shadow lacked the sharp point which formed the apex of view number one. The marks and ridges, however, could not be mistaken.

"Do I need to elaborate?" Jenness asked.

"I presume that you have used some ingenious device to present two views of the same object," Judge Clinton remarked.

"You're wrong, judge, I haven't. The view to the left, as you know, outlines the electric bulb from the porch light of the Seavering home. The view to the right also outlines a glass bulb. Until quite recently it has been filled with a vermillion-colored powder, and has served as the head of a rather flashy cane which you were kind enough to hold for me, while I put on my coat last evening."

The room was ominously, tensely silent for a full minute.

"My word, but that's clever. Why, I'm just beginning to see it." Clinton roared mirthlessly, and slapped his thigh.

"And you ask me for an opinion"—the man's laughter seemed a bit forced—"as to the strength of a case against myself—for murder! An associate of Judge Seavering, a justice of the superior bench—suspected of murder! It's farcical—" Clinton's voice broke to a falsetto. Presently he went on:

"You think you've got the goods, that you're clever, and can put it on me; but I'll fight you, finger prints and all. You ask my opinion, and I'll give it to you. There never was a capital conviction without a proven motive. Put that down in your book, Mr. Smith, or Jenness, or whoever you are."

Clinton's head wagged as he talked, and with the final word his chin went aggressively forward.

Jenness had quietly studied the man all through. Now he spoke:

"You should have been an actor, Judge Clinton. That last, for example, might have been rendered: 'Lay on, Macduff.' I'm glad you mentioned the need of a proven motive. That's an important point. In this particular case I confess to filling in the motive after I'd found the man. An exceptional case in many ways. I have made some inquiries to-day, or, rather, my agents have made them under my direction. They pursued various lines of investigation, and I have learned a number of things—among others, the fact that for the past month or more you have borrowed five hundred here, a thousand there—in short, that you have been raising a fund, an investment fund. Several of these loans have been settled within the past three or four days, invariably by check drawn on a firm of bankers and brokers. These transactions very naturally suggested an account—on the brokerage end. It was comparatively easy to find out.

"We will suppose that a broker received a telephone call—ostensibly from a customer—asking if his last order was executed. Nine times out of ten the broker will supply more information than the inquiry demands. I learned, for example, that your broker sold for your account one thousand shares of United Smelters on Friday afternoon. He sold 'at market,' as you directed. The order was booked at half past two, and executed ten minutes later."

As Jenness mentioned the thousand shares of Smelters, Clinton uttered a hissing denial. Even in the semidarkness I could see him nervously gripping the chair arms. He reminded me of a crouching lion about to spring. Jenness seemed unperturbed, however.

"One of your associates," my friend continued, "has told me that the State supreme court reached an agreement on the Smelters' injunction case at two o'clock Friday. It was decided to give out the verdict Saturday morning, and court adjourned soon after. The young woman who operates the phone switchboard in the courthouse has informed

me that Justices Lovell, Wheelock, and Rice left the building together about a quarter after two. Chief Justice Seavering passed her desk a few minutes later. He walked to the front entrance, and then turned back. As he entered the elevator to ascend, she recognized your voice asking for a number. The records show that the number you asked for was that of your broker. Shall I continue, judge? You don't seem—"

"You go to the devil," Clinton snarled. He sprang from his chair and walked to the door. It was locked.

"Try this one, judge," Jenness said easily, indicating the door leading to room 60. Clinton yanked it open, and suddenly stiffened. Captain Rogers and two policemen stood just across the threshold.

For one tense second Clinton glared at the officers, and then he made as if to pass by them. Rogers stopped him with a gesture.

"Not so fast, Judge Clinton," he said.

The two policemen closed in, one on either side.

"You'll regret this. I'll make you dance, the whole bunch of you," Clinton shouted.

"That's what they all say," answered Rogers. "Come on, boys. We'll walk down to the station, where we can talk—take the freight elevator, I guess. There's a big crowd hanging round out front."

The party stepped into the corridor, and the door closed behind them. It was perhaps a minute later that I heard a shout, followed by the sounds of hurrying feet.

"The reporters are making a rush for the back door, I fancy," Jenness remarked.

It was half an hour later. A medley of newsboys' calls floated upward from the street. Occasionally I caught an intelligible phrase: "Suicide—Clinton Arrested—Loring Set Free!" Some way, things seemed out of joint. I'd been so fully convinced of Loring's guilt. On the other hand, no preconceived

opinion could wipe away those finger prints and the unmistakable crown-shaped scar. I ruminated the various phases of the remarkable case while Jenness ran through the day's mail. At length he signed the last paper. After delivering the bundle to Jones he turned his chair in my direction. My question was ready.

"I don't quite see the connection between Clinton's market venture and the murder of Judge Seavering," I said.

"Clinton saw it, I fancy. Not that you are less astute, solicitor. The story was not altogether new to him. An extraordinary man, Clinton—ambitious and unscrupulous, with a good splash of sand. He accepted the call to the bench only as a means to an end. Before that he'd been a ward politician, and before that a— But we needn't consider his whole history. A knowledge of his whole ambition will suffice. Wealth, power—they cover it. A judge of the State supreme court receives a salary of seven thousand a year. While that is ample for one's needs, it isn't enough for Clinton. Politicians of a certain grade possess a sixth sense—the faculty of uncovering 'easy money.' Clinton had practised the art, but always on a small scale. After a political windfall had placed him on the bench, he resolved to make a 'killing.' He succeeded—twice over.

"The United Smelters' suit presented the opportunity for the first killing, and the taking of that opportunity brought about the second killing. Only one was in dollars, and the other in blood.

"As the court approached a decision of the Smelters' suit, Clinton began to lay his wires. He secured an agreement from his broker to operate on a small margin. Probably the broker, knowing that it was a sure thing, planned to 'get in' also, but that may be difficult to prove. The margin agreed upon, Loring raised his investment fund, and waited for the decision. That it was a shrewd venture is told by the quotations. United Smelters closed Friday at three hundred fifty. Saturday noon, after the decision and the smash, they sold for two hundred and

forty-one. Figure it, solicitor—one thousand shares.

"We know that Clinton called his broker at the moment Judge Seavering started up the elevator. Judge Seavering went from the lobby on the third floor through his private office to a hearing room which is also used as a sort of living room and library by the members of the court. Judge Seavering was in search of a certain book, the same which he was reading the night of the murder. The hearing room is thickly carpeted, and the judge probably made little noise. The shelves from which the volume was taken are directly beside the door through which Judge Seavering entered the hearing room. The door next in the row, beyond the shelves, was Clinton's. It was open. Judge Seavering was preoccupied probably, and we don't definitely know, of course, just when he first overheard Clinton talking with his broker, nor do we know just when Clinton first sensed the presence of a listener. We do know that precisely such a situation developed; however, and that words were passed between them. A charwoman overheard the argument, although she did not get the gist of it. She was working in Seavering's office at the time, and she states that the judge entered from the hearing room shortly afterward, apparently much exercised.

"We can imagine what took place at the interview. Doubtless Seavering demanded an explanation, and, judged by what we know of the man, Clinton probably evaded the question. Seavering pressed the matter, it is likely, and Clinton sought to justify himself. At length, probably Seavering said he would consider overnight the matter of preferring charges for Clinton's impeachment. We know that he appeared to be brooding over something at the dinner table. But for Judge Seavering morning never came. The spark evidently smoldered for hours in the tinder of the murderer's blocked ambition before the draft of a sudden passion fanned it to a flame, and Clinton re-

solved to kill in order to silence the story of his cupidity."

"All of which," I said presently, "goes to show how petty misdemeanors may eventually lead one to a great crime."

"I perceive your line of reasoning, Norman," Jenness responded, "but I cannot agree with you. Rather, I am convinced that one-half of the world's misery is occasioned by unbalanced ambitions—'black ambition,' it has been called. It is a sort of insanity. Those under its spell believe that the attainment of a certain thing will bring perpetual happiness. The coveted possession may be anything. The frump covets a bit of finery, and she becomes a shoplifter; the speculator must build a castle, and he becomes an embezzler—each according to station.

"But I say, solicitor, it's after seven, and you're hungry, I'll wager. Now, there's a quiet stall at the Dutchman's. After all, a good dinner is an excellent antidote for unruly ambition."

The telephone rang. Jenness answered: "Yes. Hello, Gard. I haven't a doubt of it. A mere trifle, old man. Clinton what? No, I haven't heard. Say that again, Gard. Good heavens, man! You don't mean it—not fifty feet from my office door! Well, perhaps it's the better way. Good night, Gard."

Jenness sighed as he replaced the instrument.

"Clinton killed himself," he announced wearily.

The news struck me like a thunderbolt, and I presume I showed it.

Jenness went on: "Yes, he took the plunge—poor devil—down the elevator well, while they were waiting. You remember that shout? That's when he went over, likely."

"It's horrible!" I exclaimed.

"It is a rather messy way of going out—took sand, though. I wonder if Clinton breathed a prayer or muttered a curse as he started on the long journey."

A Chat With You

AT the end of a well-remembered poem, Kipling describes the happy fate and reward of the good artist. He says:

"And only the Master shall praise us,
and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and
no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of the working,
and each in his separate star
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It, for
the God of Things as They are."

The lines are good and the conception appealing to most of us inasmuch as they recognize our limitations. We are not promised that we shall paint things as they are—such vision being left to the Master—but only as we see them. Of course none of us see things as they are. We see only from our own angle. And as a perfect physical eye is rare in nature so is a perfect and unspoiled mental vision. Nearly all of us suffer from a spiritual myopia or mental astigmatism, and the only help we have is in the clearer vision of those greater writers whose sight is keener and truer than our own.

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quality of glass, darkly, distorted, and robbed of beauty. For others things are magnified so that trifling events loom unduly large, and a passing fad becomes a social revolution. Others look through the wrong end of a telescope and see everything on such a small scale that life itself becomes but a little thing. Some are so farsighted as to see only the distant horizon, while others see no horizon at all, nothing, in fact, but the object immediately at hand.

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WE find all these peculiarities in vision among writers, and it is for us to walk with those whose eyes are good. It isn't what a man writes about, but how he sees it, and how he writes about it that makes the story good or bad. No one can tell a tale without having some of his own personality shining brightly or glimmering darkly between the lines. Anything that shows a conflict of character, the interplay of one nature upon another will make a good story if the writer has eyes to see it all in just and true proportion, and art and craftsmanship enough to make us see it. We don't want stories in which crooks triumph at the end, because we know they are not true to life. There may be scattering and temporary successes, but none of them are typical, and for every crook there is waiting some punishment, prison bars or social ostracism or some ultimate justice at the end. If an author is laboring under the impression that success is the reward of the unscrupulous, he can't see straight, and no matter how

ASK any three people who have been witnesses of the same event to describe it to you. No matter how veracious or observant they are, the accounts will differ. Each man's vision is modified by his prejudices, his temperament, his habit of thought. Some happy ones are gifted with mental glasses through which every goose appears a swan, "and every lass a queen." Other mental windows are very poorly glazed, so that things appear indeed through a poor

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

well he writes he is of no use to us. Crook stories breed crooked minds, and no magazine will ever make a real success on that foundation.



WE have said before, but it is worth saying again, that a story to be good in its purport and message doesn't have to work out like a proposition in Euclid, and have a neat little moral, which was to be proved, tacked on at the end of it. In fact, it is better if it does not, for in that it is the truer replica of life itself, and so much better and useful for us to read. We don't find these wise saws or neatly expressed morals hanging on the bushes in country lanes, or on the lamp-posts in city streets. The drama we see is too big and confusing to permit an indiscriminate drawing of morals from the events immediately before us. Certain things as being right or wrong are taught to us dogmatically when we are young, but later on we generally have to learn a few of them all over again, and finally really understand them by dint of hard knocks and suffering, more or less. What a writer of good fiction can do for us is to give us the benefit of his knowledge and his ideals. If we can live in the story with the characters, we can learn by example, which is a sort of vicarious experience, what we tried to learn before by precept and sometimes forgot.



THAT is why Roy Norton's novel, "Threads," which opens the next issue of the magazine, is so much more valuable than a tale in which merit meets with an instantaneous reward, and the guilty are punished poetically and on the spot. Norton's great story of the gold mine in the Virginia mountains has too much of the stress and vicissitude of

actual life in it for this. His men are actual people of flesh and blood, with feelings like ourselves, and who, sometimes, like all of us, doubt and falter. His heroine, with all her nobility of temper and finer instincts, in spite of the fact that she always rings true, is capable of hasty and ill-considered action. Similarly in Peter B. Kyne's story, which immediately follows it, two men worthy of a happier, if not a nobler, fate, die on a Philippine battlefield because each is unwilling to desert the other. They are not saved by a miracle, but you feel, as you turn the last page, that in this strange mixture of comedy and pathos you have seen things for once "as they are," that the lives were well spent, and the friendship worthy of a sacrifice.



FOR this next number of *THE POPULAR*, in which the stories just mentioned appear, we also want to announce the first installment of a new serial by B. M. Bower. For a long time we have been awaiting a Bower story, and now we have it. It is called "The Gringos," and it is quite as long as either "Lonesome Land," or "Good Indian," and, to our way of thinking, a bigger story in all respects than either of these. The time of the story is laid a little farther back in the history of the West, and shows in dramatic form the conflict of the two races, Spanish and Anglo-Saxon, and their struggle for the country. We think it the best long story Bower has ever written. We have not mentioned it before, but we think that this next issue of the magazine is one of the best yet. Not as often as we would like, do we feel that in any one number we have made a definite advance in our standard of fiction, but now we do really feel that way, and are confident that you will agree with us.



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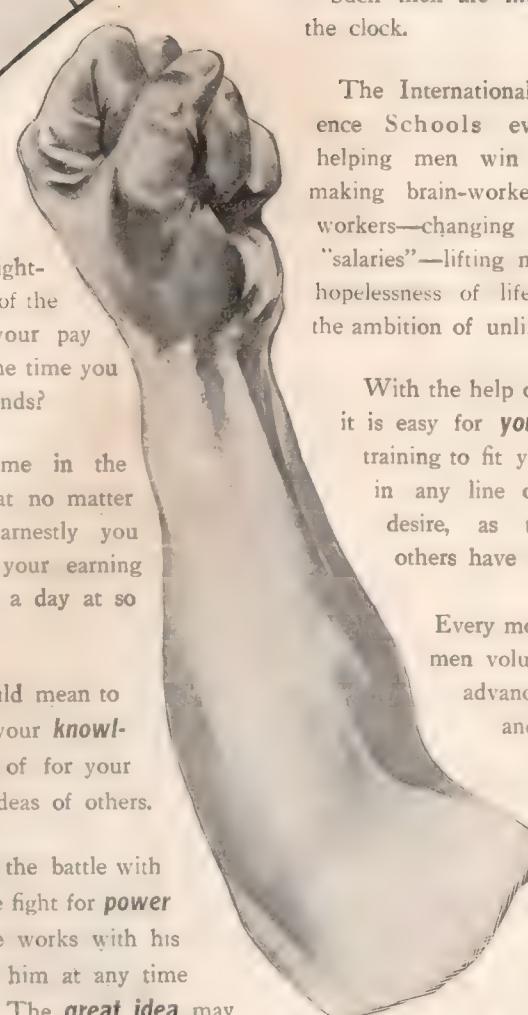


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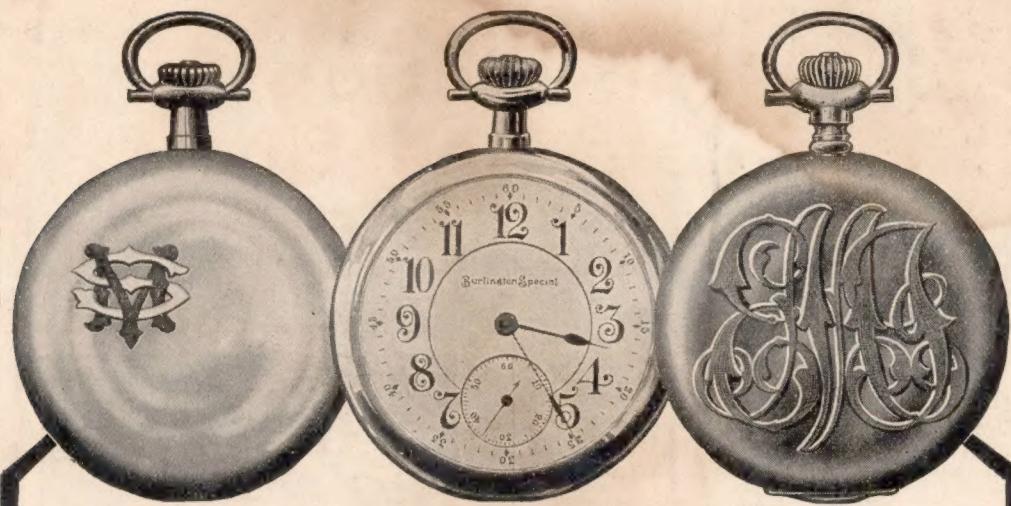
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Just the Fiction for Mountain and Shore



The next issue of this magazine, on sale July 7th, will hold more than the usual wealth of up-to-the-minute stories, especially of the sort that delights the midsummer reader.

For example, there is a splendid novel, "Threads," by **Roy Norton**, which is bound to entertain the vacationing idler from the first word to the last. Another good hot-weather yarn is that by **Charles E. Van Loan** in his new baseball series, entitled "The Fighting Spirit." Timely, too, is the tale of an automobile race written by **M. Worth Colwell**, which is called "Twice Around the Clock."

Thousands will note with an eager air the beginning of **B. M. Bower's** new serial, "The Gringos." That is an event in itself. Readers, we are confident enough to predict, will vote this story one of the author's finest efforts.

All lovers of Captain O'Shea and Johnny Kent hereby take heed that they are scheduled for the next number, to appear, of course, in the **Ralph D. Paine** novelette, "On Board the *Alsatian*."

If that is not enough by way of rich promise, let us announce three stories that ought to prove loadstones: "Hamburger Steak—Without Onions," by **Peter B. Kyne**; "Fate Maketh His Circuit," by **Robert Welles Ritchie**; and "The Deaf Mute," by **Rupert Hughes**

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